

Use knowledge to avoid alcohol poisoning

by Nina Willis
Staff Writer

According to an e-mail sent to the student body last week by Dean of Students Chris Holland, Brevard College has already experienced several problems with students drinking irresponsibly in ways that could damage their health. In order to avoid these situations, please take a look at this information from Cal Poly Health and Counseling in San Luis Obispo.

Acute Intoxication

Alcohol poisoning, like other drug overdoses, can occur after the ingestion of a large amount of any alcoholic beverage (this includes beer, wine, and distilled spirits). But inexperienced drinkers, or those more sensitive to alcohol, may become acutely intoxicated and suffer serious consequences after drinking smaller amounts. Because of differences in body chemistry, women can overdose after drinking lesser amounts than men.

Here's what happens. Alcohol (a depressant drug), once ingested, works to slow down some of the body's functions. This includes heart rate, breathing, and blood pressure. When the vital centers have been depressed enough by alcohol, unconsciousness occurs. Further, the amount of alcohol that it takes to produce unconsciousness is dangerously close to the fatal dose. People who survive alcohol poisoning sometimes suffer irreversible brain damage.

Many students are surprised to learn that death can occur from acute intoxication. Most think the worst that can happen is that they will pass out or have a hangover the next day.

Knowing

Knowing the signs and symptoms of acute alcohol intoxication and the proper action to take can help you avoid a tragedy.

A Dead Giveaway

Binge drinking (drinking five or more drinks in a row on a single occasion) is a common phenomenon on college campuses. As a result, you may come into contact with a person who is experiencing a life threatening acute alcohol intoxication episode.

But how can you tell if someone is about to become a victim of alcohol poisoning? And if they are, what can you do to help?

Alcohol Poisoning: A Medical Emergency
Signs and Symptoms

- Unconsciousness or semi-consciousness
- Slow respiration (eight or less breaths per

minute)

- Cold, clammy, pale, or bluish skin
- Strong odor of alcohol
- While these are obvious signs of alcohol poisoning, the list is certainly not all inclusive

Appropriate Action

- If you encounter someone with one or more of the above symptoms, call 911 immediately
- While waiting for the emergency transport, gently turn the intoxicated person on his or her side and maintain that position by placing a pillow in the small of the person's back. This is important to prevent aspiration (choking) should the person vomit.

·Stay with the person until medical help arrives.

Sleeping It Off?

A more difficult situation occurs when the person appears to be "sleeping it off." It is important to understand that even though a person may be semi-conscious, alcohol already in the stomach may continue to enter the bloodstream and circulate throughout the body. The person's life may still be in danger.

If you should encounter such a situation, place the person on his or her side, help them maintain that position, and watch them closely for signs of alcohol poisoning. If any signs appear, call 911 and contact your AD and the RA(s) on duty

Lab, from Page 1

currently 5 work-study students working ten hours per week each monitoring the lab. The rest of the time, IT can only monitor the labs randomly.

"It's hard to enforce suspensions because we can't monitor the labs at all times, with the Super Lab being open 24-7," Fuiks said.

"But if we do suspend somebody, we are not banning them from using computers at all, we are just trying to get them to use the computers in the library, where they can be monitored."



Photo courtesy of IT Department
Two drink containers and a can of dip found in the Super Lab recently. These items are all banned and can lead to an ejection from the lab.

and/or on your hall.

If you are having difficulty determining whether an individual is acutely intoxicated, contact a health professional immediately - you cannot afford to guess.

Know your BAC

.02%-.03%

You feel mildly relaxed and maybe a little lightheaded. Your inhibitions are slightly loosened, and whatever mood you were in before you started drinking may be mildly intensified.

.05%-.06%

You feel warm and relaxed. Your behavior may become exaggerated, making you talk faster and louder. You may also act bolder than usual. Emotions are intensified, so your good moods are better and your bad moods are worse. You may also feel a mild sense of euphoria.

.08%-.09%

You believe you are functioning better than you actually are. You may start to slur your speech, your sense of balance is off, and your motor skills are starting to become impaired. Your ability to see and hear clearly is diminished. Your judgment is also being affected, so it is difficult to decide whether or not to continue drinking.

.10%-.12%

At this point, you feel euphoric, but you lack coordination and balance. Your motor skills are markedly impaired, as are your judgment and memory. You probably don't remember how many drinks you've had. Your emotions are exaggerated, and some people become loud, aggressive, or belligerent. If you are a guy, you may have trouble

getting an erection with your blood alcohol level this high.

.20%

You feel confused, dazed, or otherwise disoriented. You need help to stand up or walk. If you hurt yourself at this point, you probably won't realize it because you won't feel pain. At this point, you may experience nausea and/or start vomiting (for some people, a lower blood alcohol level may cause vomiting). Since blackouts are likely at this point, you may not remember any of this.

.25%

All mental, physical, and sensory functions are severely impaired. You are emotionally numb. There is an increased risk of asphyxiation from choking on vomit and of seriously injuring yourself.

.30%

You are in a stupor. You have little comprehension of where you are. With an alarming blood alcohol level such as this, your body will decide to "pass out" for you.

.35%

This blood alcohol level also happens to be the level of surgical anesthesia. You may stop breathing at this point.

.40%

You are probably in a coma. The nerve centers controlling your heart beat and respiration rate are slowing down. It's a miracle if you're not dead.