

Prof: People should mull over how much wine, beer they pour

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While many people are aware of the potential health hazards posed by oversized food servings, a Purdue University expert says consumers face the same risks at the neighborhood bar as they do at a buffet bar.

"The overconsumption syndrome in this country is not only about food, but alcohol's portion sizes as well," says Julia Chester, an assistant professor of psychological sciences. "There is a lack of knowledge about standard drink sizes and that leads to consuming too many calories and experiencing alcohol's harmful effects."

Among those are alcohol dependency, as well as long-term and short-term cognitive effects that can lead to impaired judgment, says Chester, who studies the role of genetics in alcohol withdrawal and how stress influences alcohol consumption. Binge drinking - exceeding the number of recommended drinks in a short period of time - can damage the brain and liver.

"People do not know how to assess how much they are drinking, and when they have two drinks on a Friday night, it is really four or five because there are multiple doses in one giant cup," Chester says. "Two 44-ounce servings are very different from two 12-ounce servings."

The standard drink size is 12 ounces for beer, 5 ounces for wine and 1.5 ounces of 80 proof alcohol, Chester says.

Some people are ordering larger drinks or pitchers of alcohol at

restaurants because it is promoted as a good deal.

"It may be a good deal for your wallet, but it's costly for your body," she says. "We are drinking our calories, not just with alcohol, but with soft drinks, coffee beverages and sport drinks that have so-called nutrients. Research is showing that people cannot regulate calories well when they are in liquid form. In addition, intoxication and the post-ingestive effects of alcohol disrupt people's ability to regulate calorie intake."

Source: Purdue University

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