

Alcohol can be a risky guest at holiday parties

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(HealthDay)—During the holiday season, gatherings and parties are a

part of the festivities. Unfortunately, so are alcohol-related accidents and deaths.

Many people who attend seasonal parties seldom drink [alcohol](#), making them more vulnerable to its effects, according to experts at UC Davis Health System in California. Meanwhile, [heavy drinkers](#) may use holiday gatherings as an opportunity to let loose and drink too much, the experts cautioned.

Drinking in moderation can help prevent alcohol-related injuries and [health issues](#). It's also important to appoint a designated driver who will stay sober and ensure partygoers get home safely, the experts advised.

Everyone metabolizes alcohol differently. U.S. health officials define [moderate drinking](#) as one drink per day for women and two drinks for men.

The type of alcohol also matters. One drink is the equivalent of:

- 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits.
- 5 ounces of wine.
- 12 ounces of beer.

Though the federal standards may sound extreme, the UC Davis experts pointed out that alcohol is a poison that is quickly absorbed into the blood. It may cause people to become less inhibited, but it can also trigger feelings of depression.

Anyone who's had a few too many probably knows what a hangover feels like. This is actually a sign that the body is going through withdrawal from alcohol, the experts said.

Over time, heavy [drinking](#) can result in serious health issues, including

liver damage and heart disease.

People who are hosting holiday parties can take steps to ensure their guests stay safe and avoid alcohol-related problems. The UC Davis experts offered these tips:

- Don't pressure anyone to drink.
- Offer a variety of non-alcoholic beverages and serve food.
- Stop serving alcohol at least one hour before the party ends.
- Don't let guests who are drunk continue drinking.
- Don't allow guests to drive if they have had too much to drink. Remember: Coffee or a cold shower won't sober someone up. It takes time to get alcohol out of the blood.
- People with drinking problems should make a plan for how they are going to manage being around alcohol during the holidays.

Party-goers don't have to bring alcohol as a gift for their host, the [experts](#) noted. Teas, hot chocolate, cider and coffee are great non-alcoholic alternatives.

Parents attending holiday parties should set a good example for their children. It's important to send kids the message that they can have fun even without alcohol.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides additional [holiday health and safety tips](#).

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