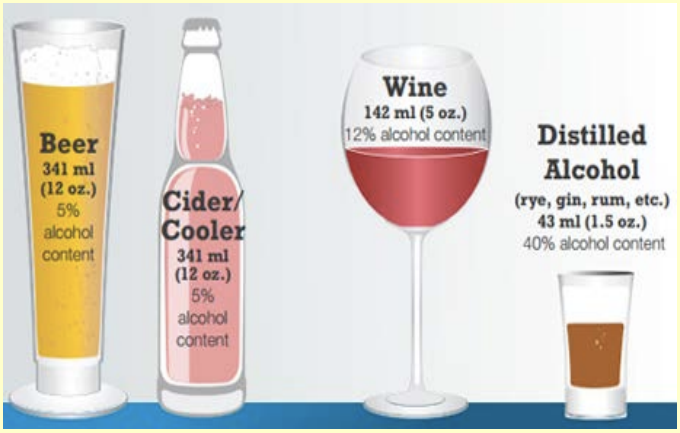
USOC SPORTS NUTRITION

ALCOHOL FACTSHEET

THE UNITED STATES OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

Alcohol and the Athlete

Alcohol impairs athletic performance mentally and physically, extending beyond the night of drinking. Understanding the consequences of excessive drinking and being mindful of your alcohol consumption can help keep you and your teammates healthy, happy, and safe!



How does it affect performance?

Alcohol impairs your ability to regulate body temperature and acts as a diuretic, leading to dehydration. In combination with the effects listed below, research has shown that “binge” drinking alcohol can decrease performance by as much as 11.4% the day after drinking. The negative effects of alcohol consumption on performance can last for up to 72 hours!

- **In the brain**, it impairs motor skills like balance, coordination, and reaction time.
- **In muscle**, it impairs blood flow, reducing muscle strength. The prevalence of musculoskeletal injury is 30% higher in athletes who drink versus those who do not.
- **In the liver**, all processes shut down to prioritize alcohol metabolism. This causes low blood sugar and impairs the use of fat as fuel, inhibiting positive training adaptations.
- **In the heart**, it disturbs cardiovascular function (especially during a hangover), increasing heart rate, perceived exertion, and blood pressure while decreasing the ability of the heart to pump blood to other parts of the body.
- **Hormonally**, testosterone decreases and estrogen increases, causing fluid retention and fat deposition that can lead to weight gain. Low testosterone also impairs the ability to increase muscle mass and strength.
- **Sleep** quality is compromised. Alcohol disturbs deep sleep cycles, which inhibits muscular repair and synthesis in addition to new skill acquisition.

How much is too much?

- Women: >2 drinks per day
- Men: >3 drinks per day
- Excessive or “binge” drinking = >2 drinks in 2 hrs

There is NO BENEFICIAL EFFECT of alcohol on sport performance. It is best to avoid alcohol within 48 hours of training or competition.

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Be Smart and Sensible if You Decide to Drink

- **Plan in advance:** Think about where you're going, who you're with, and training schedule tomorrow.
- **Save it for special occasions:** Drink when eating out rather than at home.
- **Eat before or while you are drinking:** Eating slows alcohol absorption and the rate of drinking. It is also essential for recovery and replenishment of muscle energy stores after training or competition.
- **Pace yourself:** Space out alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic drinks in between; this slows consumption and assists with hydration status (especially post training or competition the same day).
- **Select low alcohol drinks:** Choose lower alcohol beers such as pilsner or light beer; have spirits mixed with juice or soda water and ask for it in a "tall glass" with just one shot.
- **Keep yourself busy:** If you're occupied, you tend to drink less. Dance, play pool or other games; try not to just sit around and drink.
- **NEVER, EVER, EVER DRINK AND DRIVE!!!** Do not wait until the end of the night; designate a non-drinking driver before leaving the house, or take a taxi.
- **Remember all alcoholic beverages contain calories.** Limit servings to avoid consuming empty calories.

COMMON DRINKS	CALORIES
Long Island Regular Coke (8 oz)	780
Long Island Diet Coke (8 oz)	740
Pina Colada (6 oz)	380
Mai Tai (4.5 oz)	350
Margarita (8 oz)	280
Daiquiri (6 oz)	240
Mojito (8 oz)	220
Red bull & Vodka (10 oz)	210
Jager Bomb (5 oz)	210
Vodka Tonic (8 oz)	200
Hard Cider (12 oz)	190
Rum & Coke (8 oz)	185
Martini (2.5 oz)	160
Regular Beer 5% alcohol (12 oz)	140
Red Wine (5 oz)	125
White Wine (5 oz)	120
Light Beer 4.2% alcohol (12 oz)	110
Vodka or Tequila Shot (1.5 oz)	105
Sugar Free Red Bull & Vodka (10 oz)	105
Vodka Soda (8 oz)	105
1 Shot of 80 proof alcohol (1.5 oz)	100

*Serving sizes, and therefore calorie counts, may vary based on the establishment.

If I drink alcohol, I usually have:

*# drinks per night:*_____

*# nights per week/month:*_____

Estimated calories: _____

Athlete Recommendations:

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