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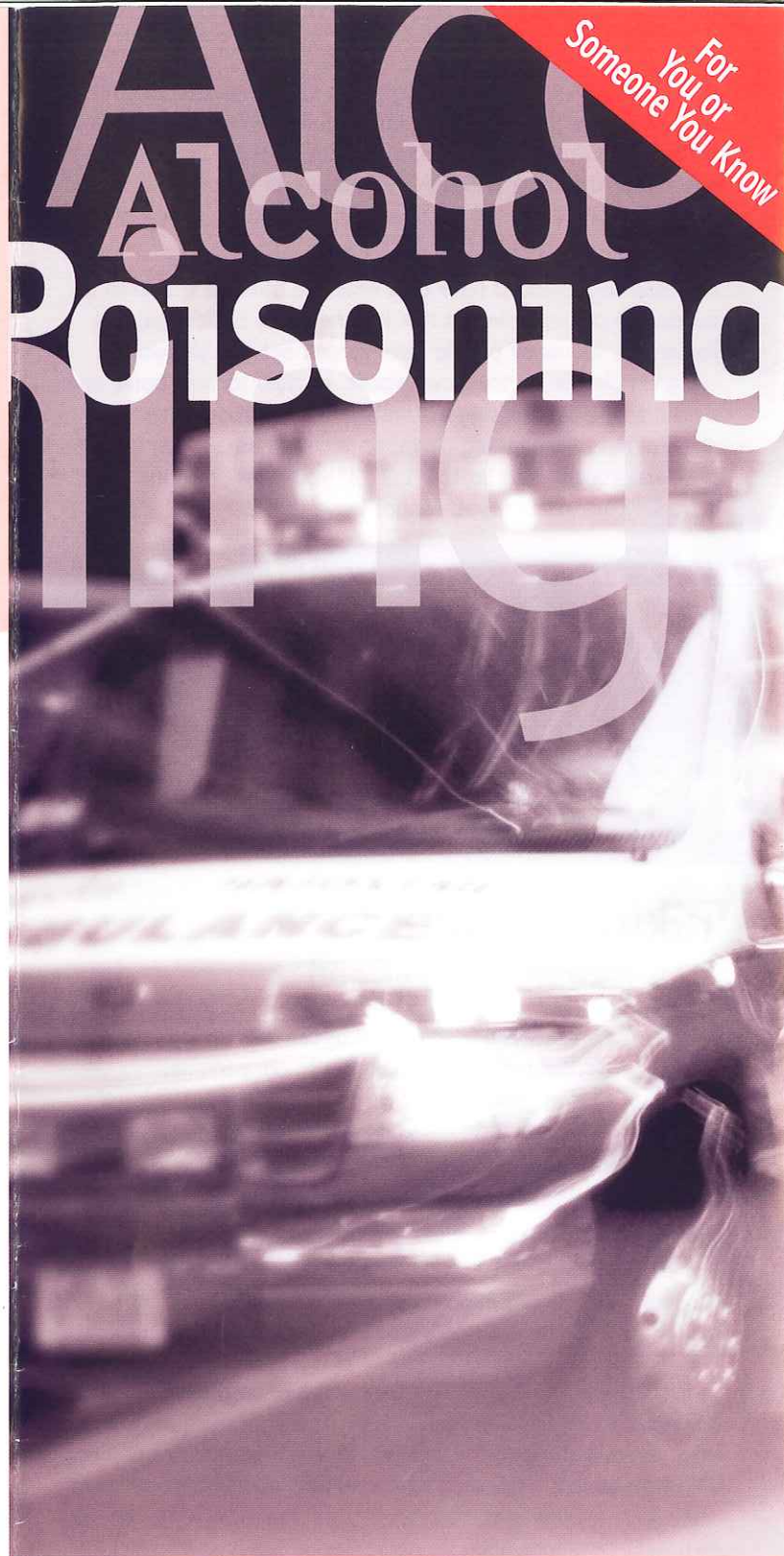
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For
You or
Someone You Know

Alcohol Poisoning

It Happened Last Night

The Story Goes Like This...

Ron and Mick were roommates and planned to host a pre-party before the campus dance for themselves and their dates. Ron had been out drinking all afternoon, and by the time he arrived at the room with his date Lisa to meet Mick and Stacey, he was already pretty buzzed. They had drinks before leaving for the dance, and even though Stacey and Mick had beer and Lisa had a soda, Ron wanted to do shots and poured himself three or four. The two couples wanted to take pictures, but Ron said he needed to get something from the bedroom first. When he didn't come back after a few minutes, Mick went to check on him, only to find him passed out cold.

Mick, Stacey and Lisa argued over what they should do. Stacey thought that Ron didn't look good and might be more drunk than they knew. She suggested they call one of the residence life staff members on duty. She believed the situation could be really serious and didn't want anything bad to happen to Ron.

Mick figured they should leave Ron alone. Ron had passed out before on a number of occasions and this looked no different. Besides, if they called a staff member, they would get caught for drinking in the building and Mick was not too thrilled about that prospect. He thought they should just go to the dance and check on Ron later.

Lisa was pretty mad at Ron for wrecking their date, but she acknowledged that Ron had done this before. She told Mick and Stacey to go to the dance. She would leave Ron where he was (passed out in bed) and watch a movie or something in the other room, to be around when he woke up.

The three of them argued over what they should do, each agreeing that the other had a valid point.

What Should They Do?



Alcohol Poisoning is a real occurrence taking place on college and university campuses. Some students are drinking heavily and quickly and becoming medical emergencies, or worse — fatalities. Certainly most students don't drink to excess and campuses are doing whatever they can to educate people and prevent tragedy from happening. However, sometimes it's not about facts or information; sometimes it all comes down to friendship.

Often we don't realize how much friendship means until a desperate situation arises. Imagine a friend is in a state where he or she cannot take care of themselves, or cannot make decisions for themselves. Who is going to decide for them? You may be placed in a position to take action — action that could be critical to your friend's life.

Do you know how to tell if your friend is in need of medical attention? Learn about it in this pamphlet.

More importantly, don't be afraid to get help from others — residence life staff, campus safety, a hospital — so you don't have to make these decisions alone.

Always, always — it is better to be safe than sorry.

Calling for help may be the greatest thing you could ever do in the name of friendship.

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Myth #2 =
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Alcohol Poisoning: A Medical Situation

We must consider alcohol poisoning as it is: a potential medical emergency. This is sometimes hard because of the prevailing attitudes on our campuses about alcohol. Someone who is drunk is often laughed at for their behavior, and if they pass out, sometimes people are even more amused. Students think it's all part of the drinking experience. We need to confront this campus attitude and we need to think of someone unconscious because of drinking as a medical situation. If you had a friend who went out to dinner and came back with food poisoning and suddenly was in the bathroom vomiting and then passed out, you would be extremely concerned and offer to help, perhaps call a staff member or the hospital. Yet if the same situation happens because of too much to drink, we hardly pay attention. We laugh and don't take it seriously.

Part of that attitude is present because many people believe "this is not a big deal, we've seen this before, nine times out of ten, the person will wake up the next day just fine." Even if this is true, it is still only nine times out of ten. It is the tenth time out of ten that suddenly is no longer funny, but tragic and painful. People are left feeling "We should have done something." Here are some things they can do.

Why is Alcohol Poisoning So Dangerous?

Before we can understand how alcohol poisoning happens, we need to know how the body responds to alcohol. Alcohol is classified under the drug category as a depressant, and as such, its use causes effects and changes in the body and brain. Alcohol use slows down many of the functions of the body, including blood pressure, heart rate and breathing. If a person has put a large amount of alcohol into his or her system, the "slowing down" can lead to passing out and unconsciousness. The vital organs, heart and lungs, can be slowed to the point of stopping.

How much drinking will cause alcohol poisoning? Different people experience different effects for a variety of reasons.

A 120-pound woman can be at risk for alcohol poisoning after she has 6-8 drinks in a three-hour period. During the same time period, a 180-pound man would need to have 12-14 drinks to put him at the same BAC level. Beginning at these levels, and certainly if more alcohol is consumed, someone is at risk of having their breathing stop.

It is also important to note that when we drink to this level of excess, we put ourselves at risk in other ways besides alcohol poisoning. Too many people have passed out and thrown up, and then choked on their own vomit, or tried to walk home and were hit by a car crossing a street, not to mention other physical risks from falling down, or getting into a fight, or risk of sexual assault. The bottom line? If you know someone is extremely intoxicated, you cannot leave that person alone.

Myth #3 =
"If my friend passed out, I don't think I would call for help. I couldn't live with myself if I got them in trouble."

Taking Action: Take care of yourself and your friends

There are two ways each of us can step up to prevent alcohol poisoning. It starts with our personal responsibility. Make the decision to not put yourself at risk by deciding not to drink in a high-risk manner. Avoid doing shots and playing drinking games.

However, there are times when people don't make the best decisions for themselves, and that is when their friends need to be there for them. If you come across someone who is unconscious or nearly passed out from too much alcohol - you need to take action. Check the signs listed on the next panel. If any of these symptoms exist, you need to call for help. Even if the symptoms don't exist, you need to commit to getting your friend home or to a safe place. If you are not sure what to do - ask for help. Get public safety or residence life staff; call the hospital or 911. Will you get in trouble? Maybe, though many campuses have some form of Good Samaritan forgiveness policy. Will your friend be upset at you for calling for help? Maybe. But your friend will be alive the next day. Regardless, don't let fear about what might

What You Can Do

Recognizing Alcohol Poisoning and Taking Action To Help

There are steps that you can take if you encounter someone who could be suffering from alcohol poisoning. If any of these symptoms exist - get help.

Try To Wake The Person

First, try to find out if the person is at all attentive. Are they unconscious? Can

they be woken up? Try and call their name. Pinch their skin; they should have some reaction. Remember alcohol is a depressant and it will numb the nerves so by pinching the skin you can gauge the extent of the overdose.

Turn The Person on Their Side/Do Not Leave Them

Turn the person on their side so that if they get sick and vomit, the airways will not be blocked and they will not choke. Put their arm above their head and roll them over, preferably on their left side. Monitor the breathing. Make sure they do not rollover on their back.

Check Skin Color or Temperature

What is their skin color and temperature? Is enough blood getting to the skin? A sign that you should get help is if a person has pale or bluish skin (depending on skin color), or the skin is cold or clammy. This person is not getting enough oxygen.

Check The Person's Breathing

How is the person breathing? If a person is breathing irregularly with a few breaths and then nothing for awhile - this is a sign that medical attention is necessary. If the person's breathing is too slow or shallow - less than 8 breaths a minute - or more than 10 seconds in between breaths - this is another sign you should get help.

There Are No Absolutes/ Everyone Is Different

These are just some of the potential signs of alcohol poisoning. A person may have one or all. For instance, there is no guarantee that if a person is breathing 9 times a minute they will be fine, or if they are breathing 7 times a minute they will die. If you cannot wake the person up at all, it is a serious situation. If you are at all concerned, don't hesitate to get help.