Healthy Living

Richmond VAMC

Veteran's Healthy Living Newsletter

VA HEALTH CARE | Defining EXCELLENCE in the 21st Century

LIMIT ALCOHOL

Alcohol & Chronic Pain

Alcohol has been used for centuries to lessen pain. The considerations include: HOW MUCH alcohol is needed to reduce pain; is that amount safe for use; and can alcohol use interfere with other medications being used for pain control & other medical problems.

Analgesic (Pain-relieving) doses of Alcohol **Exceed** Moderate Drinking Guidelines. The greatest pain-relieving effect occurs when alcohol is administered at doses exceeding guidelines for moderate daily alcohol use. *According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, drinking in moderation is defined as having no more than 1 drink per day for women and no more than 2 drinks per day for men.* Tolerance develops to alcohol's analgesic effects so that, over time, it takes more alcohol to produce the same effects. Increasing alcohol use to stay ahead of tolerance can lead to other problems, including the development of alcohol dependence.

Mixing alcohol and pain medications can have a deadly effect. Mixing alcohol and acetaminophen can cause acute liver damage and can lead to liver failure. Mixing alcohol and aspirin increases risk for gastric bleeding. Alcohol increases the analgesic (pain-relieving) effect of narcotics. At the same time, alcohol increases the sedative effects of narcotics. These two actions makes the risk for overdose high. Narcotic overdose can lead to confusion and slowed thinking, slower or stopped breathing, decreased oxygen in the blood, **violent or aggressive behavior, loss** of consciousness, seizures, muscle spasms or even death.

If you're taking medications to manage your pain, talk to your doctor or pharmacist about any reactions that may result from mixing them with alcohol.

If you choose to drink, limit yourself to one drink per day if you are female. Limit yourself to two drinks per day if you are male. Avoid drinking too much alcohol at one time (binge drinking). If you are concerned about your drinking, talk with your VA healthcare team about getting help.

Rethinking Drinking Alcohol

Keep track.	Consider logging your use on a calendar.
Count and measure.	Know the amount of alcohol you consume.
Set goals.	Decide how much and how often.
Pace and space.	Drink slowly, alternate with non-alcohol.
Include food.	Don't drink on empty stomach.
Find alternatives.	Develop new hobbies, activities, friendships.
Avoid "triggers."	Know and avoid triggers; keep no alcohol at home.
Plan to handle urges.	Partner with a friend, pass on taking a drink, or remind yourself of your goals.
Know your "no."	Just say 'no'. *It's the first word you learned.*

or, Plain **Stop** Drinking Alcohol.

Mussels Steamed with Bacon, Beer, and Fennel

1 (12-ounce) fennel bulb with stalks

1 1/2 ounces applewood-smoked bacon, cut crosswise into thin strips

10 ounce red potatoes, cut into 1/2-inch pieces (about 2 cups)

1/4 teaspoon kosher salt

1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 (16-ounce) can beer

1 1/2 pounds mussels, scrubbed and debearded (about 40)

4 ounces green beans, trimmed and cut into 1/3-inch pieces (about 3/4 cup)

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

Preparation

1. Trim tough outer leaves from fennel; mince feathery fronds to measure 2 tablespoons. Remove and discard stalks. Cut fennel bulb in half lengthwise, and discard core. Vertically slice bulb.

.2. Cook bacon in a large Dutch oven over medium heat for 3 minutes or until crisp, stirring frequently. Add fennel bulb, potatoes, salt, and pepper. Cook 10 minutes or until fennel is lightly browned, stirring occasionally. Increase heat to high. Add beer, scraping pan to loosen browned bits; bring to a boil. Stir in mussels and green beans; cover and cook 4 minutes or until mussels open. Discard any unopened shells. Stir in juice. Divide mussel mixture evenly among 4 bowls, and spoon broth evenly over mussels. Sprinkle each serving with 1 1/2 teaspoons chopped fennel fronds.

***Cooking Light* recipe**

Nutritional Information

Amount per serving
Calories: 237
Fat: 7g
Saturated fat: 2.2g
Monounsaturated fat: 2.9g
Polyunsaturated fat: 0.9g
Protein: 18g
Carbohydrate: 23.3g
Fiber: 3.8g
Cholesterol: 38mg
Iron: 5mg
Sodium: 665mg

One drink is:
12 oz. regular beer OR
8-9 oz. malt liquor OR
5 oz. table wine OR
1.5 oz. 80-proof hard liquor.

Binge drinking is having:
More than 3 drinks on one occasion for women and adults over age 64.
More than 4 drinks on one occasion for men.

Alcohol and Chronic Pain

Chronic Alcohol Drinking Makes Pain Worse

Withdrawal from chronic alcohol use often increases pain sensitivity. Increased pain could motivate some people to continue drinking or even increase their drinking in an effort to be more comfortable. This pattern leads to alcoholism.

Prolonged, excessive alcohol exposure generates a painful nerve irritation in the hands and feet. This is the most common nerve complication associated with alcoholism.

*If you use alcohol to relieve your pain, it is important to learn about possible adverse health effects. Ask your healthcare provider if **any** alcohol use is safe for you.*

Check out these websites for more information related to effect of Alcohol

Limit Alcohol: A Healthy Living Message

Limit Alcohol: Resource Document

The Facts About Alcohol

Drinking Alcohol

Department of Veterans Affairs Resources websites:

PTSD and Problems with Alcohol Use
This site gives information on how PTSD and alcohol affect each other and where to get help.

Alcohol and Hepatitis C
Use this interactive guide to learn what you need to know about hepatitis C and alcohol use, including alcohol's effect on liver scarring, viral load, and response to treatment.

Living with HIV/AIDS—Drugs and Alcohol
Use this interactive guide if you are HIV positive to learn what alcohol and other "recreational" drugs will do to your body.

April,2014 CGFlory, HPDP program manger