

DON'T DRINK *(but if you do...)*

By James Thompson "JT"

Over my career, I've had countless clients come in on Monday like it's confession time, telling me they've had too many adult beverages over the weekend. Unfortunately, drinking is typically followed by alcohol-induced overeating, which together cancel out your efforts for the week leaving you wondering "WHY aren't I losing?" Sound familiar? Drinking not only makes you hungrier, it diminishes your will power and leads to nachos, burgers, pizza, and other late night fast food. If alcohol is your downfall and you simply refuse to cut it to a minimum or quit altogether, try putting these tips into action

Eat Before You Drink

Alcohol is going to do its damage regardless. What you want to avoid is the excessive eating that goes with it. When your stomach is empty, alcohol is absorbed quickly. This means you'll feel the effects



within minutes, making you much more likely to begin eating the junk you need to avoid. Consuming lean protein (lean meat, protein shakes, protein bars, Greek yogurt, etc.) and good fats (peanut butter, mixed nuts, avocados, flax seed oil) just before you start drinking creates a good buffer because they're digested much slower than carbohydrates and they also fill you up, making the junk food less appealing.

Understand What You're Drinking

Alcohol is Alcohol. It's not the grapes in the wine, the agave in the tequila, or the barley and hops in the beer that you need to worry about, it's the ALCOHOL. Look at the proof. The percentage of alcohol by volume. If your drink is 150 proof, then it's 75% pure grain alcohol. Wine is about 12-15%, Beer +/-5%, etc. THAT's what you need to concern yourself with. For example: 5% of a 12oz. beer is alcohol. The rest is "other". A whiskey/soda is no better off in the long run than any other alcoholic drink with the same amount of alcohol in it. The alcohol remains the main issue. Your body doesn't digest alcohol like it does food. 90% of the breaking down of alcohol from a toxic substance to water and carbon dioxide is performed by the liver. The rest is excreted through the lungs (allowing for breath tests), through the kidneys, and in your sweat. Alcohol also converts amino acids into fat cells. Alcohol does NOT convert to sugar, like some people believe, but while your body is ridding itself of the alcohol, its ability to metabolize all those carbs, sugar, and fat you've just eaten is decreased by about 90%, so your body stores what it can as fat. THAT'S how alcohol contributes to weight gain.



Slow Down

One of the biggest culprits in alcohol-driven over-eating is too much, too fast. To slow down the rise in your blood alcohol level, order a tall glass of water with every alcoholic drink. Alternate sips, and be sure to finish at least 12 ounces of H₂O for every alcoholic drink. This strategy will likely cut your total consumption in half.

Prevent Pointless Munching

If you're at a bar with free happy hour food, or one that constantly serves up honey roasted nuts or pretzels, keep them away! If it's in front of you, you'll mindlessly munch whether you're hungry or not.

Plan Your Meals

Alcohol is an appetite stimulant. And we all know it lowers inhibitions (Stop it!) So if you don't want to find yourself eating junk you wouldn't touch if you were sober, prep your food. Bring protein bars, ready to drink protein shakes or even scope out restaurants nearby where you can eat relatively healthy, so when you're ready to eat you'll already have a plan.



I Saved the Best One for Last: **DON'T DRINK**

The very best way to prevent alcohol from derailing your progress is to avoid drinking altogether. Agree to be the Designated Driver. Watching others who are inebriated when you're not may be enough of a deterrent on its own in the future! While you may feel like it's not as much fun as drinking with everyone, I can assure you that being the only one to

wake up the next day without a splitting headache, nausea, poor appetite, or full of remorse, vowing repeatedly that "I'm never drinking again" has its obvious benefits.

If you try to take care of yourself, eat healthy and exercise consistently consider what alcohol does to thwart your efforts:

Slows Recovery.

Hard workouts drain the glycogen stores (carbs stored in the liver and muscles) and leave your muscle tissue in need of repair. Alcohol into your system also stalls the recovery process enormously. High levels of alcohol displace the carbs, leaving your stores still 30-50 percent lower than normal up to eight hours later.

Increases Body Fat.

When booze is on board, your body, besides having to deal with the surplus of calories, prioritizes metabolizing the alcohol over burning fat and carbs. In fact, your body WONT Metabolize ANYTHING efficiently until it burns off the alcohol (to the tune of 7.25 calories per gram by the way). Alcohol also breaks down amino acids and stores them as fat (keep it coming!) and it's more pronounced in the thighs and abdomen. It also increases levels of cortisol (a stress hormone), which further encourages fat storage and muscle catabolism.

Inhibits Sleep.

Drinking blows your muscle recovery and performance by sapping your sleep. In a study of 93 men and women, researchers found that alcohol decreased sleep duration and increased wakefulness particularly in the second half of the night where deep REM should be taking place. Disrupting the sleep cycle can also reduce your human growth hormone output which builds muscle by as much as 70 percent!

Depletes Water and Nutrients.

Alcohol irritates the stomach lining, which can reduce your capacity to absorb nutrients (the reason you have an upset stomach after a few too many). For every gram of alcohol you suck down, you pump out 10 milliliters of urine (that's about 9.5 ounces for two beers). As little as 2% dehydration

hurts endurance performance and you lose electrolytes with that. For all of you who love to quench your thirst with a cold one, remember this: you cannot rehydrate yourself with a dehydrating drink.

In the end, alcohol has **ZERO** nutritional value and is extremely harmful. If you're going to drink, be smart. Keep it minimal. Follow some of the above guidelines to help negate the damage caused by alcohol consumption, and try to watch how much junk food you eat when you do drink.

BOTTOMS UP ~ JT

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