

## ALCOHOL POISONING: WHAT IT IS, SIGNS AND STEPS

Alcohol poisoning (also known as acute alcohol intoxication) occurs when the amount of alcohol circulating in the bloodstream is so high that it drastically effects the functioning of the vital organs and systems of the body. Since alcohol is a depressant, it will slow down the heart rate, breathing and blood pressure as it circulates through the body. When a large amount of alcohol reaches the brain, the brain will automatically shut down. This results in a person becoming unconscious.

The effects of alcohol are different for different people. Different drinks don't make a difference here - the only thing that counts is the amount of alcohol in the bloodstream.

If a friend drinks too much:

### Signs to watch:

- Check responsiveness; try to wake them; call their name
- Keep them on their side to prevent choking on vomit
- Monitor their breathing
- Check your friend's skin

### Steps to take:

- If they don't respond, call 911, get help from your RA, RHD, or another professional.
- Stay and monitor – the person's blood alcohol concentration may still be rising.
- If breathing is irregular or too slow (less than 8 breaths per minute or more than 10 seconds between breaths), call 911 and get help from your RA, RHD, or another professional.
- If your friend's skin is cold, bluish, or clammy; call 911 and get help from an RA, RHD, or another professional.

IT IS BETTER TO BE SAFE THAN SORRY! You cannot afford to guess if you are unsure that someone is acutely intoxicated. You may not know exactly how much alcohol someone has drunk or if their blood alcohol level will continue to rise. Getting help is the **best thing** you can do if you aren't sure. Getting help can save your friend's life. You can't worry if they'll get in trouble or will be angry with you. You'd rather have an angry friend than a dead one.