

- Alcohol, otherwise known as ethyl alcohol, is an intoxicating chemical. It can be found in beer, wine, and liquor. Legal for those twenty-one and over, it is a deep root of American culture. It is created from a yeast enzyme that changes the simple sugars in grapes, potatoes, or corn into ethanol. It is classified as a depressant as it slows the brain's central nervous system. When someone drinks an alcoholic beverage it is rarely pure alcohol; beer is four to six percent pure, malt liquor is five to eight percent pure, wine is seven to fifteen percent pure, wine coolers are five to ten percent pure, champagne is eight to fourteen percent pure, hard liquor is forty to ninety-five percent pure, and grain alcohol is ninety-five to ninety-eight percent pure. It typically takes the average drinker an hour to metabolize one drink. As the amount of alcohol ingested exceeds the body's ability to metabolize it, the person's blood alcohol concentration increases, causing the person to feel the effects of the alcohol. (Cesar)
- **Street names:** Booze, Bubbly, Firewater, Joy Juice, Sauce, Liquid Courage (Cesar)
- **Uses:** Alcohol can be found in beer, wine, and liquor. (Cesar)
- **Short-Term Physical Effects:** The effects of alcohol is dependent on the amount of alcohol consumed, the time taken to consume, the individual's gender, weight, body size, and percentage of body fat, the amount of food the individual had eaten beforehand, the individual's use of medication, the mind-set of the individual at the time of consumption, and where the consumption takes place. Short-term effects include slow reaction times and reflexes, poor motor coordination, blurred vision, slurred speech, slowed heart rate, reduced blood pressure, slowed breathing rate, heavy sweating, nausea and vomiting, dehydration - which can cause condom breakage, coma, and death from respiratory arrest. (Cesar)
- **Psychological Effects:** Psychological effects caused by the use of alcohol include lower inhibitions and increase in risk behavior, lower reasoning ability, impaired judgment, memory loss, anxiety, confusion, and restlessness. (Cesar)
- **Long-Term Effects:** Examples of long-term effects are liver damage, accumulation of fat in the liver, cirrhosis or heavy scarring in the liver that prevents blood flow, alcohol hepatitis or swelling of liver cells, high blood pressure, heart damage, coronary disease or narrowing of the arteries, enlarged heart, irregular heartbeat, decreased blood flow to arms and legs, stroke, brain damage, lowered cognitive abilities, destruction of brain cells, increased aggression, antisocial behavior, anxiety, depression, damage to one's sense of balance, bone damage, stunted bone growth that usually takes place in the teenage years, osteoporosis, pancreas damage, pancreatitis, increased chance of cancer in the pancreas, breasts, colon, rectum, mouth, pharynx, and esophagus, reduced sperm count and mobility and sperm abnormality, menstrual difficulties including irregular cycles and reduced fertility, early menopause, birth defects, and drinking while pregnant can cause fetal alcohol syndrome. When someone consistently drinks alcohol over a period of time that person builds his or her tolerance, causing the person to require increased amounts of alcohol to feel the same effects. Someone may grow to be dependent on alcohol over time leading to addiction (Cesar).

Source:

Center for Substance Abuse Research [<http://www.cesar.umd.edu>]