ENERGY EDGE NUTRITION

Effects of Alcohol Consumption On Athletic Performance

"You can't be sharp, quick and drunk" (Nancy Clark, 2003).

The effect alcohol has on performance is huge. Interestingly enough, research indicates that for many athletes, alcohol is consumed in binges and frequently exceeds recommended levels for safe drinking (no more than 1 – 2 drinks/day).

Research also suggests that those involved with team sports may be at greater risk of excessive drinking compared to athletes participating in individual sports. Celebrating a win is not what is being discouraged. However, it need be said that as thirst quenching as alcohol may seem, it is really working against you, offering no edge on performance.

Alcohol: Stimulant or Depressant?

Alcohol is a depressant, not a stimulant. It slows down the activity in the central nervous system…. the brain. Concentration, coordination and delay in response time are affected by alcohol consumption. These are very important in regards to sport performance.

Make no mistake, once the high is over, it does not mean that the effects from the alcohol is over. The effects linger long after the blood concentration has fallen to zero. Reaction time, balance, coordination, strength, power and speed are some of the capacities that remain compromised after a night of drinking. In short, alcohol detracts rather than enhances physical performance.

Alcohol in the blood stream can make staying asleep more difficult, suppresses dreaming, therefore depriving your body from its normal sleep cycle. Sleep affects mood and peak peek performance.

Empty Calories: gram to gram

Alcohol contributes almost twice as many calories as equal amounts of carbohydrate and protein. Alcohols provide 7 calories per gram whereas carbohydrate and protein equal 4 calories per gram. Needless to say, calories in beer are easily fattening. People who drink moderately more often consume alcohol calories on top of their regular caloric intake because alcohol stimulates the appetite. These excess calories from beer, wine or liquor typically promote body-fat accumulation (commonly known as the spare tire). If you are trying to maintain a stable body weight, abstaining is preferable.

You can get loaded with beer, but your muscles are not carb loaded!

Alcohol is a poor source of carbohydrate. A bottle of beer (341 ml) provides 13 grams of carbohydrate compared to fruit juice at 39 grams. Often times, beer is thought to quench the thirst. However, the alcohol provides a diuretic effect causing you to lose fluids rather than replenish.

One study showed that athletes who drank beer lost about 2 cups more urine over the course of four hours than those who drank a low-alcohol or alcohol free beer. Hydration plays a huge role in high energy performance.

Effects of Over Consumption…

Alcohol in any amount slows down your reflexes, metabolism and your brain. It may relax you momentarily, but will ultimately deplete your performance. The impact of alcohol impacts your reaction time, balance, hand-eye coordination, accuracy and visual perception. Other performance areas compromised include: strength, power,

speed, muscular endurance and cardiovascular endurance as well as recovery.

Binge Drinking and Performance: the short and long of it!

Consuming alcohol in binges has an array of short and long-term consequences for athletes.

Short Term Effects:

- Alcohol is a diuretic that can lead to dehydration. Alcohol stimulates the kidneys to produce urine thereby causing the body to lose fluids and become dehydrated. The number one reason for early fatigue in sport is dehydration!
- Binge drinking may aggravate soft tissue injury. Blood flow needs to be reduced at the sight of injury in order to contain the injury. Alcohol consumption has the opposite effect; increasing blood flow to the area and can therefore increase recovery time.
- Consuming only a few drinks can slow the decision making process. The ability to react and make correct decisions is impaired.

Long Term Effects:

- Unwanted weight can easily creep up on you with regular binge drinking. Body weight plays a major role in athletic performance.
- Fat deposition is increased with alcohol intake. Often times high fat foods are consumed when drinking alcohol. The fat in these foods is kept as storage as opposed to being used as a fuel source.
- Frequent binge drinking can cause an athlete to fail to follow proper injury rehabilitation and management. An athlete can become distracted from carrying out pertinent recovery strategies to help the body refuel, re-hydrate, and facilitate muscle repair.

To Drink or Not to Drink…

The combined short and long term effects of binge drinking can seriously affect recovery, post exercise and subsequent exercise performance. It would seem appropriate to say that alcohol has no benefits in athletic performance and seems to do more harm than good. If you are determined to drink, do so moderately. Moderate means 2 drinks per day for men and 1 drink per day for women.

One drink equals: 1 can/bottle of beer (341-355 ml; 5% alcohol), one 5 oz glass of wine (10 – 12%), and 1 ½ oz of hard liquor (~40% alcohol).

Remember, that the same amount of alcohol has almost twice the calories as a healthful carbohydrate and protein choice and a lot less nutritional value.

For every glass of alcohol you have, consume at least one glass of water to decrease the risk for dehydration.

The wise and preferred choice: abstain!

Remember, your team and your optimal performance is counting on you.

Jorie Janzen, RD, BHEc.
Nutrition and Wellness Consulting
204.669.0672
jorielumley@hotmail.com

RECIPE OF THE MONTH:
PEANUTTY ENERGY BARS

Want an alternative to the commercial energy bar? This bar is a great fuel source for that afternoon snack. Although high in fat, it is healthful fat from peanuts and seeds.

- ½ cup salted dry-roasted peanuts.
- ½ cup roasted sunflower seed kernels or use more peanuts or other nuts.
- ½ cup raisins or other dried fruit.
- 2 cups uncooked oatmeal, old-fashioned or instant.
- 2 cups toasted rice cereal (i.e. Rice Krispies).
- ½ cup peanut butter (crunchy or creamy).
- ½ cup packed brown sugar.
- ½ cup light corn syrup.
- 1 tsp vanilla.

Optional: ¼ cup toasted wheat germ

1. In a large bowl, mix together the peanuts, sunflower seeds, raisins, oatmeal, and toasted rice cereal (and wheat germ). Set aside.
2. In a medium microwaveable bowl, combine the peanut butter, brown sugar, and corn syrup. Microwave on high for 2 minutes. Add vanilla and stir until blended.
3. Pour the peanut butter mixture over the dry ingredients and stir until coated.
4. For squares, spoon the mixture into 8" x 8" pan coated with cooking spray; for bars spoon it into a 9" x 13" pan. Press down firmly. (It helps to coat fingers with margarine, oil or cooking spray.)
5. Let stand for about an hour, then cut into squares or bars.

Yield: 16 squares or bars

Nutrition Information:
Total Calories: 3600
Calories per serving: 225

Nutrients	Grams
Carbohydrate	30
Protein	6
Fat	9

This recipe was taken from Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guide Book, third edition.

Contact Jorie Janzen, Registered Dietitian; Nutrition and Wellness Consultant with your nutrition questions or for a nutrition assessment at jorielumley@hotmail.com or call 669-0672.