MediaRoom Demo

Risky Drinking Can Put a Chill on Your Summer Fun

BETHESDA, Md., July 1, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- Summer is a wonderful time for outdoor activities with family and friends. For many people, a day at the beach, on the boat, or at a backyard barbecue will include drinking alcoholic beverages. But excessive drinking and summer activities don't mix. Drinking impairs both physical and mental abilities, and it also decreases inhibitions—which can lead to tragic consequences on the water, on the road, and in the great outdoors. In fact, research shows that half of all water recreation deaths of teens and adults involve the use of alcohol.

(Photo: http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20130701/PH39738)

Swimmers can get in over their heads.
Alcohol impairs judgment and increases risk-taking, a dangerous combination for swimmers. Even experienced swimmers may venture out farther than they should and not be able to make it back to shore, or they may not notice how chilled they're getting and develop hypothermia. Surfers could become over-confident and try to ride a wave beyond their abilities. Even around a pool, too much alcohol can have deadly consequences. Inebriated divers may collide with the diving board, or dive where the water is too shallow.

Boaters can lose their bearings.
According to research funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, alcohol may be involved in 60 percent of boating fatalities, including falling overboard. And a boat operator with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) over 0.1 percent is *16 times* more likely to be killed in a boating accident than an operator with zero BAC. According to the U.S. Coast Guard and the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators, alcohol can impair a boater's judgment, balance, vision, and reaction time. It can also increase fatigue and susceptibility to the effects of cold-water immersion. And if problems arise, intoxicated boaters are ill equipped to find solutions. For passengers, intoxication can lead to slips on deck, falls overboard, or accidents at the dock.

Drivers can go off course.
The summer holidays are some of the most dangerous times of the year to be on the road. When on vacation, drivers may be traveling an unfamiliar route or hauling a boat or camper, with the distraction of pets and children in the car. Adding alcohol to the mix puts the lives of the driver and everyone in the car, as well as other people on the road, at risk.

Stay hydrated and stay healthy.
Whether you're on the road or in the great outdoors, heat plus alcohol can equal trouble. Hot summer days cause fluid loss through perspiration, while alcohol causes fluid loss through increased urination. Together, they can quickly lead to dehydration or heat stroke.

But this doesn't have to happen. At parties, make at least every other drink a nonalcoholic one. If you're the host, be sure to provide plenty of cold, refreshing nonalcoholic drinks to keep your guests well hydrated. If you know you'll be driving, stay away from alcohol. And remember, there's no shame in taking a cab or sleeping on a friend's couch if you feel at all unsure if you should be driving.

Summer will end, but consequences can endure.
You can have fun in the sun and still be safe. Avoiding beverages that cause mental and physical impairment while piloting a boat, driving a car, exploring the wilderness, and swimming or surfing is a good place to start. Be smart this summer—think before you drink, and make sure that you and your loved ones will be around to enjoy many summers to come.

Myths and Facts

MYTH: If you drink just beer or wine, you'll be fine.

FACT: It doesn't matter what type of alcohol you chose to consume—a drink is a drink. Your blood alcohol content (also known as BAC, the percentage of alcohol in your blood) is what determines how intoxicated you are.

MYTH: Drink coffee. Caffeine will sober you up.

FACT: Caffeine may help with drowsiness, but not with the effects of alcohol on decision-making or coordination. The body needs time to metabolize (break down) alcohol and then to return to normal. There are no quick ways to sober up—only time will help.

For more information on preventing problems with alcohol this summer, and tips on cutting back, visit **http://www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov.**

SOURCE National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, National Institutes of Health

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