

ASK THE NUTE GURU

THE NUTE (NUTRITION) GURU IMPARTS WISDOM ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF NATURAL, WHOLE-FOODS NUTRITION FOR MIND/BODY WELLNESS.

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Hey Nute Guru, I'm embarrassed to admit it, but I tend to get carried away with drinking at holiday parties. Do you have any tips on how to enjoy the social lubricant without overdoing it?

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We've all had those times when we forget our limits with alcohol, but nothing is worse than waking up regretting what happened at the office holiday party. Here are some tips you can keep in mind all year long. Some of them even affect your diet!

It's December and the holiday spirit is in full swing – and so are the holiday spirits! At this time of year, people are finding plenty of reason to raise their glasses in happy toasts. But with celebration comes a note of caution.

Says Stuart Mandell, a credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor at NewYork-Presbyterian/Westchester Division in White Plains. “The most important thing I suggest is that people be aware of how much they're drinking, and what effects those drinks are having on their behavior. Responsibility is key, and everything else stems from that.” Responsible drinking means that you never have to feel sorry for what has happened while you were drinking. It also means not becoming drunk to the point of losing control. “Alcohol consumption should not be the center of the holiday festivities,” advises Mr. Mandell.

Some tips for partygoers:

1. Know your limit. It's important to know how much alcohol you can handle without losing control.
2. Stick with mixed drinks on the rocks. Ice helps dilute the potency of the alcohol.
3. Alternate alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic beverages. Club soda is an example.
4. If taking prescription medications, don't drink at all. This includes over-the-counter drugs such as sleeping pills and cold or cough medicines. Alcohol should be avoided while taking certain antibiotics, arthritic, anti-depressant, and many other prescription medications. Check with your physician or pharmacy before you drink while on any prescription drug.
5. Don't drink on an empty stomach. Eat before, during and after your finished drinking. It is particularly good to eat high protein foods such as cheese and peanuts, which help to slow the absorption of alcohol into the circulatory system.

6. Pace yourself. Don't be looking to consume large quantities of alcohol in a relatively short amount of time. Space out your alcoholic drinks to keep the desired blood alcohol concentration.

7. Sip your drink. If you gulp a drink for the effect, you are losing a pleasure of drinking, namely tasting and smelling the various flavors. This is particularly true for wine.

8. Appoint a designated driver. Have someone available who will not be drinking and will drive all drinkers home. This is critical if the person has consumed more than one drink per hour.

9. Abstain altogether. There is no law that says you absolutely HAVE to drink while at a party. “You can have just as good a time enjoying the food, and the company,” points out Mr. Mandell. If you are hosting a party, you play an important part in how the alcohol is handled. Some ideas for keeping alcohol-related incidents at a minimum:

- Make sure plenty of snacks are on hand. Also make sure that your guests are eating along with drinking. Have plenty of high quality snacks such as cheese, meats, nuts, etc.
- Don't push the drinks. Let the glass be empty before you offer a refill.
- Set a closing time. Decide, in advance, when you want your party to end. At this time, stop serving alcohol and serve coffee and a substantial snack. This provides some non-drinking time before your guests drive home. “Keep in mind,” says Mr. Mandell, “that coffee does not ‘sober up’ your drunk guests and neither do cold showers. If your friends have consumed too much alcohol, let them sleep at your house, have someone else drive them home, or call a taxi.”