# ALCOHOL AND HYPOPITUITARISM

In BC, the current legal drinking age is 19 and older. Make sure you know the legal drinking age if you travel outside of province or country. In order to use alcohol wisely and safely, it is important to understand how your body handles it. Alcohol is absorbed very rapidly and requires no digestion. It is carried in the bloodstream to the liver, where it is processed (detoxified). The liver removes the alcohol from your system as fast as it can, but the process is slow. The liver can only remove the equivalent of one drink per hour. If you drink more than this, the alcohol builds up in the bloodstream, which leads to intoxication (drunkenness). Drinking slowly, diluting your drink with a mix, and eating are all ways to slow down the rapid absorption of alcohol.
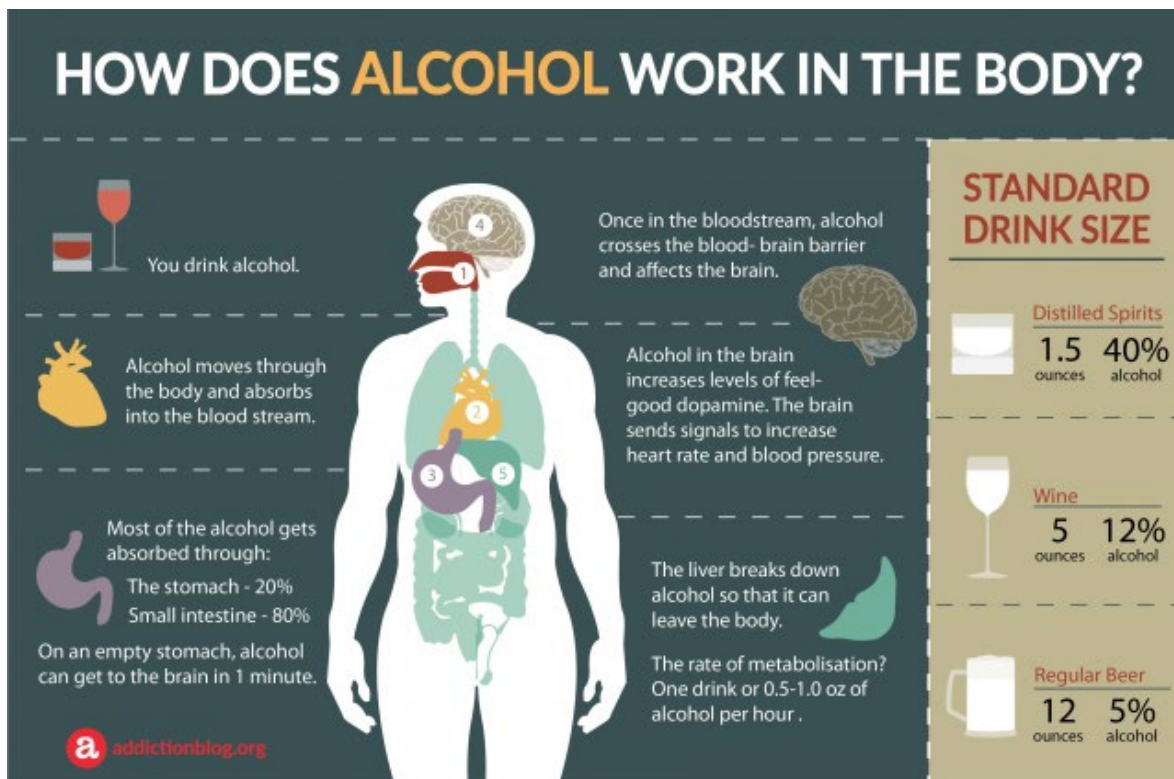
addictionblog.org/infographics/alcohol-in-the-body-from-drinking-to-elimination-infographic

You can check how alcohol or other common drugs affect your medication here: www.drugcocktails.ca. Enter your medication in the search bar and click on the arrow.

In general, short-term alcohol use will not have an effect on growth hormone (somatropin), Synthroid (thyroid hormone), estrogen or testosterone. Alcohol may alter your ability to remember to take your medication. Alcohol may slow down the removal of estradiol from your body resulting in headache, abdominal pain or vaginal bleeding. Long-term use of alcohol can have

detrimental effects on your body, including your endocrine system and mental health. If you need help coping with the stresses of life, talk to a trusted member of your medical team.

Alcohol and Cortisol

If you are cortisol-dependent, alcohol can increase your risk of:

- Electrolyte imbalances caused by vomiting
- Falling asleep and forgetting to take your next dose of medication
- Injury or vomiting, resulting in a need for emergency hydrocortisone injection

Tips for while you are out:

Take your medication while you are out if it is due. Bring extra medication in case you don't get home in time for your next dose. Include your injectable hydrocortisone with your medication.

If you do overindulge, ensure you have your alarm set for the morning to take your cortisol replacement as usual. If you oversleep and have a hangover, then taking your cortisol replacement later than normal will only make things worse.

If you become unwell or injured while you are out with your friends, they may not know how to help you. Lethargy, headache, nausea, and vomiting—which can be signs that you need more cortisol—may be mistaken for signs of intoxication. Ensure you have a medical alert bracelet or a wallet card to alert people in case you cannot respond for yourself. Ideally, ensure one of your trusted friends is aware of your medical needs.

Alcohol and DDAVP

Alcohol is a diuretic and can block the effect of DDAVP. Therefore drinking alcohol can increase the risk of fluid imbalance. If you plan on having a few drinks:

- Monitor yourself for signs of dehydration (such as a dry mouth, frequent clear colourless urine/unable to concentrate your urine, headache, and dizziness) or fluid overload (headache, puffiness of hands and ankles, nausea).
- Do remember that peeing a lot can be a normal part of drinking a lot of alcohol. When you drink alcohol, it may be harder to notice subtle changes. Try to think about your thirst, it can help to tell you what you need.
- Peer pressure can be a problem. Remind your friends about your diabetes insipidus (DI). Good friends will respect your choice if you tell them you need to pass on a drink.
- Do carry a DI emergency card with you (available free from the Pituitary Foundation (www.pituitary.org.uk/media/564996/DI-Patient-care-card_update_Aug-HI-RES.pdf), so that if you were to become unwell, you would be treated appropriately.

If you have persistent vomiting, go to Emergency. You will need to have your sodium level checked. The vomiting could be due to the alcohol, but it could also be a sign of fluid overload. It is important to determine the cause.