The 7 Things that Effect How Alcohol can Affect You

1. AGE – Generally elderly people (55 and over) and adolescents experience greater impairment from alcohol than young adults or middle-aged adults. This is due to less body water, and less tolerance in older adults and an immature liver in adolescents. Our liver generally matures around the age of 22 ½.

2. BODY SIZE – Level of impairment is based on the amount of lean mass. Generally people of smaller body size are more impaired by alcohol. However, if two people weigh the same and drink the same amount, the one with more fatty tissue will usually be more impaired. Muscle mass is mostly water, and water will mix with the alcohol. Fatty tissue will not mix with the alcohol, so more alcohol will be stored in the body.

3. GENDER – Women are typically more impaired from the same amount of alcohol than men of the same size. This is due to the lack of an alcohol cleansing enzyme, and generally more fatty tissue. Women may also become impaired more quickly and stay impaired longer one to three days before menstruation.

4. ILLNESS OR TIREDNESS – Someone who is tired, sick or just getting well experiences greater impairment from alcohol. Fatigue greatly increases risk for impairment, especially for adolescents and 2nd and 3rd shift workers.

5. OTHER DRUGS – This refers to prescription, over-the-counter, and illegal drugs. Drinking alcohol while taking any drug can intensify the effect of the alcohol. Drugs have synergy, which means that when mixed the effects do not balance out, but multiply upon each other. This is dangerous and can be fatal. Common over-the–counter drugs can greatly increase the risk of overdose. People taking any medicine should talk to their doctors about the risk of drinking.

6. STOMACH CONTENT – Drinking alcohol with an empty stomach causes greater impairment. This does not mean that you can eat food to “soak up” alcohol. Food must be present before one begins drinking. If food is added afterwards, the body will process the alcohol while the food waits in line.

7. ALTITUDE – Drinking at high altitudes increases impairment due to less oxygen.