



Sigma Nu Fraternity

EXCELLING WITH HONOR

Alcohol is a Drug Discussion Guide

Use the following discussion questions to process the poster's message.

- *What is a drug interaction?*
 - The impact different types of drugs have on the brain and body and how they respond when used with other drugs.
- *Why is it important to understand this?*
 - People taking more than one substance at a time can result in harmful, even deadly, drug interactions.
 - Although the exact outcome can be hard to predict, the general trend can be described based on drug classification/type.

Drug Classifications/Types

Potentiation – two drugs that work in the same direction

- Instead of $1+1 = 2$, it's a case of $1+1 > 2$. Your body experiences the effects of each drug, along with an additive (or increased) effect.
- This means a person could have a relatively low BAC, but if another substance has been taken, the person could show depressant effects that are 2.5 to 3 times or more pronounced.
- Combining alcohol with other depressant-classified drugs can result in breathing slowing (or stopping) and heart rate slowing (or stopping).
- Example:
 - Two depressants – Alcohol + Marijuana, Vicodin, Xanax, Opioids, Ketamine (K), GHB, or Heroin

Antagonistic – two drugs that work in the opposite direction

- Because one drug slows the central nervous system and one drug speeds it up, the body is placed physiological "tug of war," which can short-circuit the central nervous system and cause cardiac arrest.
- If the effects of a substance are masked, a person might continue using one (or both) substances more than they normally would, thus potentially leading to a lethal dose.
- Stimulants tend to leave the body faster than depressants, meaning that as drugs wear off at different rates, the person could be left with a lethal dose of the depressant (alcohol).
- Example
 - Two stimulants – Alcohol + Cocaine, Adderall/Ritalin, Energy Drinks, Meth, or MDMA (Molly/Ecstasy)

Cocaine – results in a three-way drug interaction

- The liver manufactures a third drug, called cocaethylene, which produces a more pronounced high, objectively, and increases the risk of death.

Over-the-Counter Pain Medications (aspirin, acetaminophen, ibuprofen) – the biggest issue here is the safety of your body and internal organs

- Alcohol increases the threshold for gastric bleeding, and so do painkillers.
- Additional concerns related to the stomach, kidney, and liver functions have been reported.

Sigma Nu Fraternity, Inc.

9 North Lewis Street P.O. Box 1869 Lexington, VA 24450

[540] 463-1869 headquarters@sigmanu.org

WWW.SIGMANU.ORG

Prescription Medications (antibiotics, anti-depressants, or other medications) – just because prescriptions can be obtained legally does not mean they are safe when combined with each other or with alcohol. Even small combinations can prove to be dangerous.

- Based on your personal health, the effect of the interactions may vary.
- Ask your prescribing provider if you can drink alcohol while on the medication.
 - If they say no, that's important to know for the following reasons:
 - The medication needs a chance to do what it is intended to do, and alcohol can interfere.
 - There could be serious interactions that occur between alcohol and the prescribed drug.
 - The interactions could cause permanent damage to internal organs.

Why is this important to know?

If you choose to use alcohol in combination with another drug, it creates an unpredictable situation with how the interaction will impact your body. Reading the label every time you use a non-prescription or prescription drug and taking the time to learn about drug interactions can be critical to your health.

If you are ever worried about your personal or someone else's condition after consuming more than one substance, **immediately call 911** to seek emergency medical support.

