

Binge Drinking Defined

On February 5, 2004, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) National Advisory Council approved the following definition/statement:

A “binge” is a pattern of drinking alcohol that brings blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 gram percent or above. For the typical adult, this pattern corresponds to consuming 5 or more drinks (male), or 4 or more drinks (female), in about 2 hours. Binge drinking is clearly dangerous for the drinker and for society.

- In the above definition, a “drink” refers to half an ounce of alcohol (e.g., one 12-oz. Beer, one 5-oz. glass of wine, or one 1.5-oz. Shot of distilled spirits).
- Binge drinking is distinct from “risky” drinking (reaching a peak BAC between .05 gram percent and .08 gram percent) and a “bender” (2 or more days of sustained heavy drinking).
- For some individuals (e.g., older people or people taking other drugs or certain medications), the number of drinks needed to reach a binge level BAC is lower than for the “typical adult”.
- People with risk factors for the development of alcoholism have increased risk with any level of alcohol consumption, even that below a “risky” level.
- For pregnant women, any drinking presents risk to the fetus.
- Drinking by persons under the age of 21 is illegal.

Source

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