THINK BEFORE YOU DRINK!

What is Alcohol Poisoning?

When a person has alcohol poisoning they have consumed a toxic amount of alcohol, usually over a short period. Their blood alcohol level is so high it is considered toxic (poisonous). The patient can become extremely confused, unresponsive, disoriented, have shallow breathing, and can even pass out or go into a coma. Alcohol poisoning can be life-threatening and usually requires urgent medical treatment.

- The liver can process one unit of alcohol per hour so drinking two units in one hour leaves you with one unit floating around in your bloodstream.
- The faster you drink the higher your BAC (blood alcohol concentration) becomes. If you drink too fast your BAC can spike dangerously high.

Signs & Symptoms

The following signs and symptoms may indicate a progression from being drunk to alcohol poisoning:

- Vomiting
- Pale skin
- Individual is unresponsive but conscious
- The individual passes out
- Unusual breathing rhythms
- Very slow breathing
- Confusion
- Loss of coordination

Reducing Your Risk of Alcohol Poisoning

- Avoid binge drinking
- Know your limits when it comes to drinking
- Pace yourself when drinking
- Drink in moderation
- Choose drinks that have less alcohol content
- Drink water during and/or between alcoholic drinks
- Avoid alcohol when taking medications

How to Help Someone Who is Overly Intoxicated

The National Health Service (NHS), UK, says that if you believe somebody is suffering from alcohol poisoning you should call for an ambulance, and provide the following assistance until it arrives:

- Try to keep the individual awake
- Try to keep them in a sitting position, not lying down
- If they are able to take it, give them water
- If the person is unconscious put them sitting upright and check they are breathing
- Don’t give them coffee, it will worsen their hydration
- Do not lay them on their back
- Do not make them walk

Common Myths about Alcohol

- Drinking coffee will help a drunk person sober up
- Eating a big meal before you drink will keep you sober
- Cold showers help sober a person
- Everyone reacts to alcohol in the same way
- Switching between beer, wine, and liquor will make you drunker.

Sources:
http://alcoholism.about.com/od/about/a/aa040615.htm
http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/alcohol-poisoning/basics/symptoms/con-20029020
http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/otheralcoholinformation/factsaboutalcoholpoisoning.aspx