

# Athletes VS. Alcohol

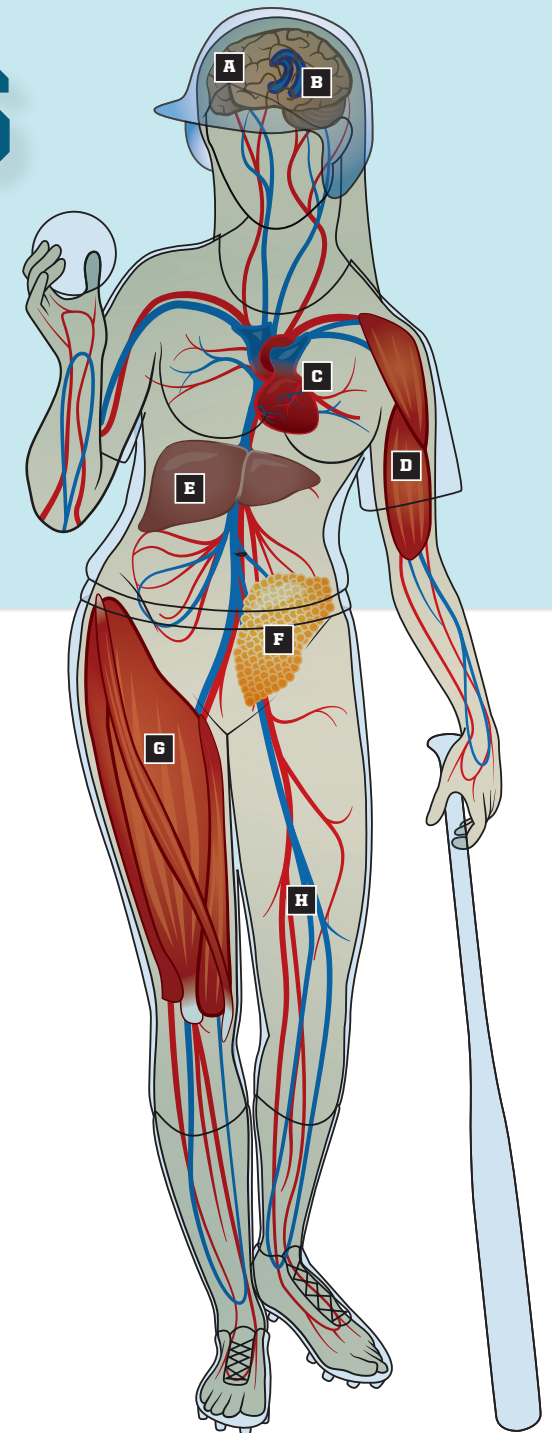
## Staying on the Winning Team

See how alcohol affects each part of the body by matching the letters to the information on the back.



TEXANS FOR  
SAFE AND  
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### **A. Alcohol Affects Sleep**

When a person drinks alcohol, even six hours before going to sleep, they are disturbing their sleep cycle. When alcohol disrupts this sleep cycle, your body will have less energy and your brain will have trouble making new memories and retaining information.<sup>1</sup>

### **B. Alcohol Hurts Your Brain and Your Memory**

Drinking alcohol can harm the brain, especially when the brain is changing during the teen years. One part of the brain, the hippocampus, is especially sensitive to alcohol. The hippocampus is used to form and store new memories, so when the hippocampus is affected by alcohol, an athlete will not be able to remember plays or store new lessons or skills as easily.<sup>1</sup>

### **C. Alcohol Can Damage Your Heart**

Intense exercise increases your heart rate. Drinking alcohol even two days before exercising causes additional stress on the heart and can result in unusual heart rhythms.<sup>2</sup>

### **D. Alcohol Harms Muscle Growth**

Chronic alcohol use can damage long-term performance by causing muscle damage, muscle loss, and muscle weakness. This muscle loss and weakness is known as myopathy. Myopathy can affect all muscles, such as those in your arms, legs, & heart, in a way that can harm athletic abilities.<sup>3</sup>

### **E. Exercising with a Hangover Decreases Performance**

When exercising, your body must remove lactic acid. After drinking, a person's liver is working hardest to rid the body of the toxic by-products of alcohol and cannot remove the lactic acid. This causes a feeling of fatigue which lowers athletic performance.<sup>2</sup>

### **F. Alcohol Increases Fat**

Calories from alcohol are stored as fat. Your body works to expel alcohol as quickly as possible since it cannot store it effectively. Your body focuses on ridding itself of alcohol instead of absorbing nutrients and burning fat.<sup>2</sup>

### **G. Alcohol Hurts Your Performance**

Alcohol is linked with a loss of balance, reaction time, memory, and accuracy of fine motor skills.<sup>4</sup> Drinking alcohol leads to slower running and cycling times, weakens the heart's ability to pump, impairs temperature regulation, decreases grip strength and jump height, lowers stamina, and reduces strength and power.<sup>5</sup>

### **H. Alcohol Causes Dehydration**

Alcohol is a diuretic, meaning it makes your kidneys produce more urine, so it can cause your body to become dehydrated. Staying hydrated helps blood flow, which carries oxygen and nutrients to the muscles.<sup>2</sup> When dehydrated, an athlete may experience low energy, low endurance, cramps, muscle pulls, muscle strains, and muscle loss. Full recovery from dehydration can take up to a week!<sup>6</sup>

**To join Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth in preventing underage and risky drinking, visit [TxSDY.org](http://TxSDY.org) or email [info@TxSDY.org](mailto:info@TxSDY.org)**

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