



Does Alcohol Help With Sleep?

According to the [20% or so of Americans](#) who use alcohol to help with sleep, it certainly seems that alcohol can assist one to nod out. But, is drinking alcohol really the answer to gaining great ZZZ's? And, does alcohol-induced slumber offer the same benefits to your brain and body as natural sleep? It's time to take a deeper dive to explore the real impacts of alcohol on sleep, and if in fact it helps or hurts.

Yes, It Helps!

If you've ever ingested any type of alcoholic beverage, (you have, right?), you're probably familiar with the feeling of fatigue or sleepiness that can set in during or after drinking. Since alcohol is a [depressant](#) and down-regulates the body, even moderate drinking can have a sedating effect. In fact, alcohol seems to [boost adenosine](#), a chemical that helps induce sleepiness.

Consequently, alcohol can reduce the time it takes to fall asleep. Some [studies](#) even suggest that a nightcap can lead to an increase in deep sleep during the first half of the night. Woo-hoo and score a big one for the helpful combo of sleep and popping the cork or going for a cold one! You get to fall asleep faster and have more deep sleep during the first half of the night! These results rival finding an [amazing mattress](#) to sleep on for great, restorative sleep! Or, do they?

Yikes, It Hurts!

While alcohol helps us to sleep faster initially and may even provide more deep sleep in the first half of the night, not surprisingly, that's not the whole story. According to [Psychology Today](#), during the second half of the night, sleep becomes more actively disrupted. As alcohol is metabolized and its sedative effects dissipate, the body undergoes what scientists call a *rebound effect*. This includes a move from deep to lighter sleep, and more awakenings and sleep disruptions during the second half of the night.

Surely, tossing and turning a bit in the middle of the night isn't all that terrible? Think again. For one, the awakenings, which are frequently accompanied by [alcohol-induced sweating](#), disrupt [REM sleep](#) which is essential for learning, memory, focus, creativity and problem-solving. Consequently, poor or too little REM sleep during the night can lead to problems functioning the next day at work or at home. And, funny thing is, if REM sleep is thrown off, your entire [sleep schedule](#) gets out of whack as well.

Moreover, in a study conducted by [Harvard University](#), alcohol raises epinephrine, aka adrenaline, in the body which can cause middle of the night awakening and real difficulty falling back to sleep. The last thing you want in the wee hours of the night is for your body to be loaded with stress hormone! And, it stands to reason that all alcohol-related symptoms are influenced by the amount you drink. In short, the more you booze the more you lose! Play it smart then and learn to calculate your [blood alcohol level](#).

I Gotta Pee

Okay, so too much drinking of anything before going to sleep will cause you to wake up in the middle of

the night to use the bathroom. As a [diuretic](#) though, alcohol will likely create an even greater need to wake up and void. Getting up multiple times during the night to pee is yet another disturbance to REM sleep. Plus, since alcohol is a diuretic, it causes [dehydration](#) in your body. Maintaining [proper hydration](#), in addition to every other reason why it's important, is also critical for a restorative night of sleep.

Oh, My Goodness, What Else?

I'm so glad you asked! Have a look at some other detriments alcohol may have on you, your body and sleep.

Alcohol can:

- 1 Cause [muscle relaxation](#) in your throat which makes you more prone to snoring and [sleep apnea](#), a potentially serious condition
- 2 Trigger [new sleep disorders](#) or exacerbate existing ones like insomnia, sleep walking and [sleep talking](#)
- 3 Suppress [melatonin](#), aka, the sleep hormone
- 4 Worsen [liver function](#), gut health and depression
- 5 Exacerbate [hotflashes](#)
- 6 Increase [Restless Leg Syndrome](#)
- 7 Lead to next day fatigue

Women Beware

In addition to increasing hot flashes and night sweats, alcohol also seems to have a more general detrimental impact on women compared to men. According to the [National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism](#), women appear to be more vulnerable than men to many adverse consequences of alcohol use. Women achieve higher concentrations of alcohol in the blood and become more impaired than men after drinking equivalent amounts of alcohol.

Furthermore, in a [study](#) conducted at Boston Medical Center, after a night of controlled alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinking by both women and men, where body weight and age were factored in and equal states of inebriation achieved, women woke up more during the night, stayed awake longer, and slept for less time overall. Men, before exchanging high fives, please take note that this is not your green light to mix boozing with sleeping. Alcohol messes with sleep irrespective of gender.

How to Have Alcohol and Sleep Well Too

While bypassing alcohol consumption altogether may be your surest bet to protect REM sleep and sleep overall, there are options which can help to negate the negative impacts of booze on your snooze.

- ï Keep your alcohol consumption to two drinks a night or less.
- ï Consider changing nightly imbibing to every other night.
- ï Drink an eight oz. glass of water in between every alcoholic beverage; especially if you're having more than two drinks.
- ï Stick with the early and mid-evening hours when [drinking](#), while avoiding morning or early daytime.
- ï Stop drinking alcohol at least two to three hours before going to bed.

The Verdict

Alcohol consumption can help you to fall asleep and even enter deep sleep faster than is typical during the first half of the night. Despite this, the truth is that even moderate drinking is more likely to create problems than offer solutions. Quite simply, the more you drink at night, the greater the negative impacts of alcohol on your brain, body and sleep.

Unfortunately, alcohol [tricks](#) people into thinking they're sleeping better than they really are. No matter how you slice it, conking out from alcohol is not the same thing as natural, restorative sleep. Its role as a sedating sleep aide by many is therefore misguided. Cutting back on alcohol consumption, as well as drinking water in between alcoholic beverages to offset dehydration, can go a long way to reduce the negative impacts that alcohol can have on your sleep.

Meta Description

Does Alcohol Help With Sleep?

The more you booze the more you snooze, but learn if conking out from alcohol is as great as natural, restorative sleep.

Photo Request

- ï 1,094 words
- ï Keywords: Alcohol, sleep, falling asleep after drinking, middle of night awakenings, women extra hit, restless leg, hot flashes
- ï The article looks at the pros & cons of drinking alcohol for better nighttime sleep. While people who drink before bed fall asleep faster, they ultimately sleep more poorly during the middle of the night.

Sources: Does Alcohol Help With Sleep?

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