



BY ALISON BAILIN BATZ

Little White Lies We Tell Ourselves... About Alcohol

*I ain' t as good as I once was;
I got a few years on me now.
But there was a time, back in my prime;
When I could really lay it down.*

Well, Toby Keith, that might be the problem.

The research is pretty clear—according to the National Center on Addiction and Drug Abuse, nine out of 10 addicts started using drugs and alcohol in their teen years. And many of them, while not encouraged to drink by family, are not always actively deterred by them, either.

Many parents believe that alcohol is a normal part of growing up, but in reality, introducing alcohol into one's life at an early age can cause long-term damage to one's memory, motor function, organs and more.

April is Alcohol Awareness Month in the United States, and so a perfect time to look at the above and myths we tell ourselves about alcohol at every age.



MYTH: Everyone drinks in their teens.

Not true. Although 31% of teens said they've drunk alcohol in the past month, that still leaves 69% who did not.

MYTH: Alcohol gives you energy and is a perfect pick-me-up after work.

Wrong again. "Alcohol is a depressant, and not only will it make you sleepy, but it will make you bloat and cause weight gain—especially those fruity cocktails," says Dr. Coral Quiet, a radiation oncologist at Arizona Center for Cancer Care who is focused on educating the public about the impact alcohol has on weight, memory and long-term risk of disease.

MYTH: "Beer before liquor, never been sicker—liquor before beer, you're in the clear."

Yes, we've all heard this. But sorry, your blood alcohol content determines how drunk you are and how sick you will get— not a rhyme.

MYTH: I just feel fabulous—like a celebrity—after a few drinks!

Feel however you want, but alcohol is a surefire way to make you look like anything but a star.

"It dehydrates your entire body, meaning it ages your skin, even if you are still in your teens, and dries out your hair faster than the Arizona sun ever could," says Quiet.

MYTH: What's the worst that can happen, getting my stomach pumped?



"It depends—are cancer, heart disease, diabetes, cirrhosis of the liver and/or getting into a drunk driving accident worse?" asks Quiet. "Because alcohol has been linked to them all—in fact, alcohol is a factor in more than 20,000 cancer deaths each year in the United States alone."

MYTH: Let me take a shower, or just give me some bread or coffee—I will sober right up!

Are the words "shower," "bread" and "coffee" new slang terms for a time machine? Because the only thing that sobers a person up is time.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, depending on your age and weight, it takes about 90 minutes to two hours to eliminate just one average-sized drink from your body.

MYTH: I'll stay skinny by only drinking skinny drinks.

With all alcohol, a moment on the lips really will cause a lifetime on the hips.

"Drinks—whether skinny, fruity or frothy—have simple sugars, which turn to fat pretty fast after you pass out from binge drinking and are then too hung over to go to the gym the next day," says Quiet.

And, she adds, you aren't the only one who loves sugar—diabetes, heart disease and cancers can't get enough of the stuff.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/features/alcoholawareness.

Given the above, in honor of Alcohol Awareness Month, we change the names of some of the most common alcoholic drinks to fit their effect on the body. . .

*Old Name: Margarita
Serving Size: 10 oz.
Calories: 700-800
New Name: Cancerita*

*Old Name: Long Island Iced Tea
Serving Size: 10 oz.
Calories: 600-800
New Name: Fat Island Diabetes Tea*

*Old Name: Regular Beer
Serving Size: Two Bottles/Cans
Calories: 300-500
New Name: High Blood Pressure Potion*

*Old Name: White Russian
Serving Size: 8 oz.
Calories: 600-700
New Name: Sick American*