Alcohol and Anxiety

When dealing with stressful days or nervous situations, you may be tempted to have a glass of wine or a beer to calm your nerves. However, drinking alcohol, especially heavily and over a long period of time, can actually increase your anxiety.

Drinking alcohol can have serious consequences if you’re being treated for anxiety. Having a drink might seem like a good way to ease anxiety, but you may be doing more harm than good.

‘Unwinding’ with alcohol
There’s some truth to the idea that alcohol can reduce stress. Alcohol is a sedative and a depressant that affects the central nervous system.

At first, drinking can reduce fears and take your mind off of your troubles. It can help you feel less shy, give you a boost in mood, and make you feel generally relaxed. In fact, alcohol’s effects can be similar to those of anti-anxiety medications.

Occasionally unwinding with alcohol isn’t necessarily dangerous if your doctor approves. But once you start drinking, you can build a tolerance to the de-stressing effects of alcohol. This can make anxiety and stress even more difficult to cope with.

Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol can also have noticeable physical and mental consequences. Over time, consuming too much alcohol can lead to blackouts, loss of memory, and even brain damage (especially if it causes other health problems, such as liver damage). These issues can create more anxiety as you cope with their symptoms.

The sense of relaxation you feel when you drink can often be attributed to your blood alcohol content (BAC). A rise in BAC levels leads to temporary feelings of excitement, but feelings of depression occur as BAC levels fall. As a result, it’s possible that having a few drinks that make your BAC rise and then fall back to normal again can make you more anxious than you were before.
**How alcohol worsens anxiety**

Alcohol changes levels of serotonin and other neurotransmitters in the brain, which can worsen anxiety. In fact, you may feel more anxious after the alcohol wears off. Alcohol-induced anxiety can last for several hours, or even for an entire day after drinking.

With social anxiety, you may find social situations unbearable. It’s common for people with social anxiety disorder to drink alcohol to cope with social interactions. Doing this can lead to a dependence on alcohol during socializing, which can make anxiety symptoms worse.

**Alcohol is not anxiety treatment**

Moderate drinking is not the same for all genders and age groups. In the United States, “moderate” typically refers to two drinks a day for adult men and one for women. Older adults should limit themselves to one alcoholic beverage per day. Ask your doctor if moderate alcohol consumption is suitable for you.

The benefits of alcohol consumption can sometimes be outweighed by the risks, which include:

- depression
- obesity
- liver disease
- cardiovascular damage

Alcohol affects everyone differently. It can cheer you up after a rough day or make you feel more sedated. Discuss these concerns with your doctor first to see if alcohol is safe for you.

Alcohol isn’t an anxiety treatment. Seek help from a mental health professional if you have anxiety. If you think you have a problem with alcohol, seek help from your doctor right away.

*Source: HealthLine*
Tips for Reducing Anxiety

Anxiety can be treated, but it isn’t always curable. However, you can make lifestyle changes to help you reduce your anxiety as well as learn to cope with it.

There are some daily changes you can make to reduce your anxiety.

- Sleep regularly and consistently, around 6 to 8 hours a night, depending on your age.
- Limit the amount of caffeine and alcohol you consume, as both can increase your level of anxiety.
- Eat consistent and healthy meals every day.
- Set aside time every day to focus on relaxation techniques, such as meditation or yoga.
- Make time each day to engage in a relaxing hobby, such as listening to music or painting.

You can also learn to cope with your anxiety by slowing it and preventing it from increasing and causing panic attacks:

- Slowly breathe in and breathe out to calm yourself down when you begin to feel anxious.
- Think positive thoughts when you feel your thoughts becoming too negative or overwhelming.
- Slowly count from 1 to 10 or higher until feelings of anxiety begin to fade.
- Focus on something that makes you laugh or feel positive emotions until your anxiety starts to fade.

Source: Source: HealthLine