

Montclair State University

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

TOLERANCE

Your peak BAC is a good reflection of your tolerance level. If you are reaching BAC levels beyond the normal social drinking range and if you are not feeling some of the normal effects of a lower BAC, your body may have already developed a tolerance to alcohol.

Remember Tolerance:

- Is partially inherited and partially learned
- For the most part, Tolerance does not mean being able to get rid of alcohol at a faster rate (although this occurs to a small extent). Rather it means reaching high levels of alcohol in the body without feeling or showing the usual effects.
- Normal drinkers are sensitive to low doses of alcohol. They feel the effects of **1-2 drinks**, and this tells them that they have had enough. If you do not feel the effects of alcohol after 1-2 drinks this could be the sign you are developing tolerance. This increases your risk of alcohol abuse and dependence.
- As a result of tolerance you are more likely to take in large quantities of alcohol—enough to damage the brain and other organs of the body over time—without realizing it

A good analogy to think of is the person who loses all sensations of pain. While at first this might be a blessing, in fact, it is a curse, because you can be severely injured without feeling it. For example, the first sign that your hand is on a hot stove is the smell of smoke. Similarly, for tolerant drinkers, the signs of intoxication are felt at rather high BAC levels.

Adapted from:

Dimeff, L. A., Baer, J. S., Kivlahan, D. & Marlatt, G. A. (1999). Brief Alcohol Screening & Intervention for College Students Basics: A Harm Reduction Approach New York, Guilford Publications.

Miller, W.R., Zweben, A., DiClemente, C.C., & Rychtarik, R.G. (1995). Motivational enhancement therapy manual: A clinical research guide for therapists treating Individuals with alcohol abuse and dependence. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Project MATCH Monograph Series, Volume 2. (Ed) Margaret E. Mattson.

The information provided is for educational purposes only and in should not substitute consultation with a trained professional.

Counseling and Psychological Services
Gilbreth House 973-655-5211