



Be Responsible About Drinking (B.R.A.D.) Foundation

Women Need to Know Alcohol Use is a Gendered Issue

“I was hospitalized after participating in the ‘beer olympics’ at my school. It was a competition between my sorority and a fraternity. We played a series of drinking games and I tried to keep up with the guys and it ended up getting me into trouble. I am lucky that I am ok and that my friends knew to take me to the hospital.” Lea

“As a college student with an intense class schedule and lots of other time commitments, life can get extremely stressful. After a tough week of midterms or papers, it is not uncommon to want to release those feelings by going out and drinking with my friends. It’s almost as if we’re retaliating against the stress of our week. Because of the built-up stress, it’s easy to drink enough to black out or get sick.” Susan

A common misconception among men and women is that alcohol misuse and related alcohol issues are gender-neutral. Alcohol misuse, however, is an issue of which young women need to be particularly aware. Presently female binge-drinking* rates are on the rise. Thirty-one percent of 12-17 year old girls admit to drinking alcohol, which means they are beginning at an increasingly early age. The increase in alcohol use among young women raises many health issues.

Female health risks associated with alcohol misuse are not the same as male health risks. Women drinkers face a higher risk of liver dysfunction, and tend to drink alcohol as a result of depression more often than men. There are also important safety issues related to women and alcohol misuse. According to RAINN (Rape and Incest National Network), “in 2002, seven out of every eight rape victims were female and in about one out of three sexual assaults, the perpetrator was intoxicated—30 percent with alcohol, 4 percent with drugs.”

Physiological Issues: Many studies on alcohol use show that alcohol affects males and females in different ways. Women have a lower toler-

ance to alcohol than men, because there are significant physiological differences in how women metabolize alcohol, as stated by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services:

“An enzyme that is important in metabolizing or processing alcohol works differently in females than in males. In males, the enzyme – called alcohol dehydrogenase – breaks down much of the alcohol in the stomach so that less of it enters the circulatory system. In females, the enzyme is less active”.

In addition, women’s bodies have a smaller percentage of water in their systems, regardless of body weight. This means that if there is less water in a person’s circulatory system, the alcohol is less diluted, which results in quicker intoxication.

These important physiological factors are key for women in understanding responsible alcohol use. It is important to be aware of the consequences of binge drinking in order to prevent hospitalization, permanent liver and kidney damage and alcohol poisoning.

Abstain from alcohol and seek medical attention if any of the following signs of alcohol damage persist:

- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Lowered resistance to infections
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- Swelling of the abdomen

For further information and advice contact the National Health Information Center at 1- 800-336-4797 or at www.health.gov/nhic/, or the National Women’s Health Resource Center at 1-877-986-9472 or at www.healthywomen.org/

Psychological Issues:

Depression is a significant risk factor for alcohol misuse in young women. At the onset of puberty one in four girls suffer from depression, double the rate of boys. According to the Department of Health and Human Services: “Adolescent girls who are heavy drinkers (drink four or more drinks in a row on at least 5 different days in the past month) are more likely than boys to say that they drink to escape problems or because of frustration or anger.”

Because alcohol is a depressant, binge drinking can intensify depression in young women. Women also cite stress and

Women Need to Know Alcohol Use is a Gendered Issue (Cont'd)

frustrations as reasons to binge drink. Although alcohol may provide a temporary escape, most women feel worse off once the effects wear off.

If you suspect you are using alcohol to cope with stress and depression, here are some prevention tips:

- Become aware of your own reactions to stress.
- Get a hobby or two. Relax and have fun.
- Exercise regularly.
- Eat a balanced diet daily.
- Talk with friends or someone you can trust about your worries/problems.
- Seek professional help

For confidential advice call The National Hopeline (24 hours) at 1-800-784-2433 or go to www.hopeline.com

Sexual Assault Issues:

Women must also be aware that their physical safety is at risk when binge drinking. The risk of rape and sexual assault increases when alcohol use increases in both males and females. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism: "Sixty-seven percent of the male sexual aggressors at one university, as well as about 50 percent of female victims, had been drinking at the time of the sexual assault or other incident of victimization."

Over 17 million women have been victims of rape or attempted rape and 66 percent of them knew their assailant. The percent rises to 92 percent among adolescent rape vic-

tims. On college campuses one in four women are victims of rape. Eighty-Four percent of those women knew their assailant and 57 percent of those rapes happened on a date. It is important for women to beware of these statistics so that they can protect themselves and make responsible decisions when drinking.

Alcohol is the number one date rape drug. Blacking out or passing out from overuse of alcohol is as dangerous as the effects of other date rape drugs such as, GHB and Rohypnol. A victim of drug-assisted rape may suffer memory loss for several hours, and will most likely have a pounding headache and a feeling that something is not right.

If you feel you are in a vulnerable situation, here are some prevention tips provided by Sexual Assault Facts and Education (rivervision.com/safe/):

- Trust your gut. If you don't feel comfortable in a situation, leave it.
- Take care of yourself. Don't put yourself in a situation where other people might have to take care of you, because they might not be there.
- Be careful when inviting someone into your home, or going to someone else's home. These are the places that most acquaintance rapes occur.
- Be aware of alcohol and drugs. They can compromise your judgment, and the judgment of your partner.

"I have a friend who got really drunk, brought a guy that she met in class home, they ended up fooling around, and it turned out they ended up having sex. She didn't find this out until the next day, when she had an inkling they might have, so she asked him what happened and he told her that they had sex. So, she had lost her virginity and didn't even know it. He said that they talked about doing it for a while to make sure she was ok with it, none of which she remembers, so she has no recollection of her 'first time' due to alcohol." Erin

- If things start to get out of hand, leave, protest loudly. Don't wait for someone else to help. If things feel uncomfortable, leave.
- Call 911

If you or someone you know is a victim of rape call RAINN's hotline 1.800.656.HOPE, extension one

Clearly, alcohol affects women differently than men. Women need to be aware of these differences in physiology, psychology and physical safety in order to make responsible choices when using alcohol. Education is the most important tool for making these healthy decisions. If young women are educated on the alcohol risks unique to females then they will look out for one another and help others to be responsible about drinking.

Letters from the B.R.A.D Foundation Mailbox...

Dear McCue family,

Our daughter attends MSU and recently turned 21. She received your card the week before her birthday and called to share it with us. (She has since shared it with MANY of her friends.)

We are truly sorry about your terrible loss, but felt the need to say "thank you" for spreading this strong message - what a wonderful tribute to your son. We will be mailing a donation to B.R.A.D., and once again thank you for sending out this strong and much needed message.

Sincerely,
Vliek Family
Portage, MI

'We are truly sorry about your terrible loss, but felt the need to say "thank you" for spreading this strong message - what a wonderful tribute to your son.'

Jasmine,

Thank you for everything!! We got the wallet cards and they are being distributed this coming week. We are so excited that you were able to help us. Those cards are such a fantastic resource and I am a firm believer that every student needs to have one in their wallet. Thank you again for doing what you do. You all do make a difference.

Jacki Bolin
Residence Director
Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville

'Those cards are such a fantastic resource and I am a firm believer that every student needs to have one in their wallet.'

Dear Cindy McCue;

My name is Jonathan Martone and I am a junior at James Madison College at Michigan State University. A few weeks ago I turned 21, a birthday that some college age kids cannot wait to have. As for me, I was excited to gain new privileges that come with turning 21. However, I was also aware of the responsibilities that come with those new privileges. Not only do I have a responsibility to myself, ensuring my safety, but I also have a duty to ensure that my actions do not harm others as well.

A few days before turning 21 I received a card from your foundation, B.R.A.D. I was immediately impressed with your idea and its presentation. The card catches attention, provides important and possibly life saving information, and also touches its readers sharing the saddening story of your late son.

I would like to thank you for your courageous act of taking the initiative to spread awareness about such an important issue. It's through the efforts of people like you and your organization that lives will be saved and futures will be fulfilled. I want you to know that your message is getting out there and is making a difference.

Best Regards,
Jonathan M. Martone
Troy, MI

'I want you to know that your message is getting out there and is making a difference.'

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**P.O. Box 1021
Clarkston, MI
48347-1021**

Phone: 248-842-4021
Fax: 248-625-3183
Email: contact@brad21.org

Newsletter Staff:

Editors: John & Cindy McCue,
Jasmine Greenamyer

Writer: Lauren D'Amore

WWW.BRAD21.ORG

The **Be Responsible About Drinking (B.R.A.D.)** Foundation was founded on February 2, 1999 by the family and friends of Bradley McCue, a Michigan State University junior who died of alcohol poisoning on November 5, 1998, his 21st birthday.

Purpose

The Foundation's mission is to educate young adults (high school and college age) and their parents as to the effects and consequences of alcohol use and abuse. Our educational materials and presentations focus on the signs and symptoms of alcohol poisoning and encourage responsible use (or abstinence for all individuals who are under age 21).

Birthday Card program began April 1, 1999. The program provides young adults turning age 21 with a reminder to celebrate responsibly. Over 104 colleges and universities in 31 states and the District of Columbia have mailed B.R.A.D. birthday cards to their students. Many additional schools have adopted a modified B.R.A.D. birthday card or have developed their own cards based on the concept. Cards are also available for individuals through the B.R.A.D. web site. Over 208,000 B.R.A.D. birthday cards have been distributed through the participating schools.

Laminated B.R.A.D. Wallet Cards were developed in 1999. These cards provide important information relative to the signs and symptoms of alcohol poisoning and discuss appropriate emergency measures. Over 435,000 wallet cards have been distributed to universities, colleges and other interested organizations and individuals. Wallet cards are often inserted into the birthday cards distributed by the colleges participating in B.R.A.D. birthday card program.

To order these and other program materials, please visit www.brad21.org/request_literature.html

B.R. A.D. Foundation 2004 Donors

The B.R.A.D. Foundation has relied on the generous donations of friends and advocates of the organization's educational goals and activities. The continuation and scope of our projects is dependent on the donations received.

We would like to thank all of our 2004 donors for their support.

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Donations to the Foundation are tax deductible. To learn more visit www.brad21.org/make_a_donation.html



President and Founder, Cindy McCue receiving a \$1,000 donation from the Oakland County Employees Casual Day Fund from Oakland County Executive Brooks Patterson.

