



personaltrainer

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Boxing clever over alcohol and health

There are many reasons not to drink, but if you must, here are some tips to minimise the damage

ALCOHOL can be part of a healthy diet but overdoing it can be detrimental to your waistline and health. As we all know, booze can wreak havoc on your body.

This is especially true if you are one of the growing number of people who follow a strict regimen Monday to Friday topped off by an almighty binge at the weekend.

It is a growing trend in Ireland among young adults and can be a dangerous habit. Hours are spent in the gym, fat and carbs are strictly off limits; but come 5pm on Friday it's drinks and kebabs all round.

Alcohol doesn't have to be off-limits if you are trying to get lean and healthy; however, it is important to bear a few things in mind when taking a drink.

CALORIFIC

Alcohol is extremely high in calories and sugar. Often I see women being super clean with their diet yet downing a couple glasses of wine after work. They are puzzled as to why the weight isn't shifting. Think of booze as a food, it has calories and if you overdo it you will gain weight.

Plus your body prioritises metabolising the alcohol over burning fat and carbs, which leads to weight gain. Alcohol also breaks down amino acids and stores them as fat.

It increases levels of cortisol (a stress hormone), which further encourages fat storage in the body, particularly in your midriff. Alcohol will also slow down your metabolism.

How many times have you fallen off your healthy diet wagon when you have had a few drinks? Think of the empty calories in the alcohol

that you are drinking and then add in those extra "bites" on the way home.

If you are hoping to lose weight you need to watch not only your food intake but your alcohol intake.

BLOOD SUGAR

Not only does alcohol contain empty calories and have no nutritional value, it disrupts your blood-sugar levels.

Maintaining adequate blood-sugar levels is one of the key functions of your metabolism, but when you drink alcohol your body rushes to excrete the toxins as soon as possible, which knocks maintaining your blood-sugar levels out of sync.

Alcohol inhibits your body's ability to make glucose and to maintain healthy levels of glucose (or blood sugar) in the blood. Try to avoid drinking on an empty stomach because this can cause dangerous drops in blood-sugar levels.

REST AND RECOVERY

Drinking after a workout slows down your body's recovery process. Alcohol drains the carbohydrates that are stored in the liver and muscles (glycogen stores) and leaves your muscle tissue in need of repair.

This can lead to injury and fatigue.

Human Growth Hormone, which builds muscle, is produced during your sleep cycle.

Drinking interferes with your sleep and therefore reduces your HGH output by as much as 70pc.

If you haven't slept well the night before due to a night on the town, your workout suffers the next day – either you skip it or you can't give it as much.

WATER AND NUTRIENTS

Alcohol dehydrates the body, not to mention that it makes you pee a lot.

Alcohol irritates your stomach lining and your body's ability to absorb nutrients, vitamins and minerals from food.

ALL OR NOTHING

This doesn't mean you can't be healthy and drink moderately without any long-term physical effects. It is all about balance. You don't have to be perfect to still get the body and health that you want.

Plus you will drive yourself nuts trying to achieve that perfection!

Here are some tips to help you remain lean and healthy while enjoying a few drinks;

- Have a good workout on the days you know you are going out. This can help cancel out the extra calories you are going to consume.
- Have a nutritious dinner packed with protein and vegetables. This will help control your appetite and give your body the nutrients it needs to function properly.
- Try to choose clear drinks with soda water, rather than those multi-coloured, sugar-laden drinks.
- Avoid the late-night munchies on the way home and if you feel you need to eat, perhaps have something semi-healthy pre-cooked for when you get home.
- Drink water regularly during the night. This will help with dehydration as well as cutting your consumption down, too.

Having balance in your life is the key to living healthily. Completely denying yourself certain pleasures will only lead to frustration and all-out binges.

Remember, this is a lifestyle, not a quick-fix fad, so everything in moderation.

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