



SERVITUP



**UNDERSTANDING
HOW ALCOHOL
AFFECTS THE BODY**



As you know, serving alcohol comes with both risk and reward.



21%
OF REVENUE

When done responsibly, serving alcohol can help your business flourish—research indicates that restaurants that offer alcohol generate an average of 21% of their revenue from drink sales alone.¹

However, serving alcohol irresponsibly can result in steep fines, liquor license revocation, a loss in revenue, and sometimes serious physical harm.

Serving alcohol responsibly is critical for protecting your customers, your community, and your business. The first step toward ensuring safe and responsible alcohol service at your establishment is by understanding what alcohol does to the body.

In this eBook we'll explore:



Current drinking trends



How our body removes alcohol



Alcohol's journey through the body



Knowing the risks

Current Drinking Trends

The United States is witnessing a steady and consistent increase in alcohol consumption year after year, reflecting evolving trends and behaviors within the country's drinking culture.



14%
INCREASE

Revenue from alcoholic drinks **increased 14% in 2023**, with an expected annual growth rate of 8.8%.²

Alcohol is becoming increasingly easier to purchase with expanded buying options

In 2023, 20 states and the District of Columbia have made alcohol to-go permanent, while another 14 states are allowing it on a long-term, but temporary basis. *Among these states, 70% of full service restaurants currently serve cocktails to-go, and about 4 in 10 serve wine by the glass to-go.*¹

What does this mean for your business?

These upward trends in drinking imply increased risk as customers could be consuming alcohol at a more frequent rate in your establishment.



Alcohol's Journey Through the Body

Once alcohol is consumed, it is immediately absorbed into the bloodstream and begins working its way throughout the body.

In order to better understand the dangers of increased alcohol consumption, let's take a look at how alcohol moves through the body. Because alcohol moves through the bloodstream in order to be metabolized by your body, people often talk about an individual's level of intoxication in terms of Blood Alcohol Content.



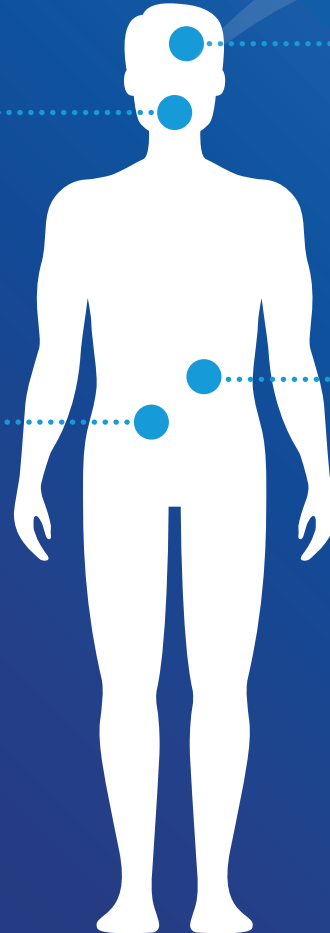
THE MOUTH

A small amount of alcohol is immediately absorbed from the mouth into the bloodstream.



SMALL INTESTINE

From the stomach, the alcohol moves into the small intestine. Most of the alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream from here.



BRAIN



Once in the bloodstream, alcohol travels quickly throughout the body. It reaches the brain in minutes.

STOMACH



The rest of the alcohol moves into the stomach. Some is absorbed into the bloodstream through the stomach as well.



BAC

BAC, or Blood Alcohol Content, is the **amount of alcohol in a person's bloodstream** at a time. People often talk about BAC in terms of a percentage.

Research has shown that a person's motor skills can be significantly affected at .08. As a result, nearly all 50 states have defined the legal level of intoxication for driving at .08%.

According to the [National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism \(NIAAA\)](#), binge drinking is defined as a drinking pattern that results in BAC levels of 0.08% and above.



For **adult men**, that's usually around **5 drinks** in a couple hours, and for **adult women**, it's generally around **4 drinks**.

Physical Signs of Intoxication

As alcohol enters the bloodstream and travels to the brain, key processes such as motor skills, coordination, memory, and judgement become affected.

Depending on the individual's BAC, physical signs of intoxication might be subtle, therefore it's crucial for servers to monitor guests for behavior changes.

Keep an eye out for these four signs of intoxication, especially when serving customers:

1

Relaxed Inhibitions

The individual is displaying a change in behavior such as being overly friendly, being overly unfriendly, depressed, quiet, loud, or using foul language.

2

Impaired Judgement

The individual is using bad judgement, such as ordering stronger drinks, becoming careless with money, or making argumentative statements.

3

Slowed Reaction Time

The individual is talking or moving slowly, is unable to concentrate, or is becoming drowsy.

4

Impaired Motor Skills

The individual is staggering, stumbling, falling down, spilling drinks, or slurring their speech.

Remember, the physical signs of intoxication are sometimes hard to identify so always measure out alcohol and keep track of the amount of drinks you are serving to individuals.



How Our Body Removes Alcohol

Despite what you may have heard about “sobering up” after becoming intoxicated, the only way the body removes alcohol is through the liver. And the only thing that aids in this process is time.



A healthy liver processes alcohol at a rate of about one drink per hour.

Although there is no real way to help someone “sober up” quickly after becoming intoxicated, there are things you can do as an alcohol server to slow down alcohol absorption.

Many different factors affect a person's BAC— **one of them is food.**

Food keeps alcohol in the stomach for a longer period of time, slowing its movement into the small intestine—and, more importantly, the bloodstream. [Someone drinking on an empty stomach is more likely to have a higher BAC than someone who has eaten.](#)

[Offering food with alcoholic beverages](#) is a great way to keep your guests satisfied and safe. Any food is better than no food, but for best results, offer food high in fat or protein, and avoid suggesting carbohydrates and salty food.

Learn more about making better food suggestions at [ServSafe Alcohol](#).



Knowing the Risks

Being aware of the challenges associated with alcohol service will help position you and your business to reap the rewards.

Drinking frequency has increased overall in the U.S. While this means you might have more patrons drinking at your establishment, remember to keep an eye out for signs of intoxication.

With ServSafe, your team can let the good times roll while practicing responsible alcohol service.

Stay tuned for more safe alcohol handling content brought to you by [ServSafe Alcohol](#).

¹ National Restaurant Association. (2023, June 7). Alcohol beverage services overflowing with potential to draw customers, drive sales.

² Snipp. (2023). 2023 Trends in the Alcoholic Beverage Industry - US and Europe.

³ National Restaurant Association. (2021). State of the Restaurant Industry.