

LifeMatters®

A Newsletter from Your EAP and WorkLife Service

Being Smart About Alcohol Use

For most people, an occasional alcoholic beverage when out to dinner or visiting with friends is not a concern. However, for some people, even casual drinking can lead to larger problems.

A drink is defined as 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits. Most experts recommend no more than one drink per day for women and two per day for men. Drinking alcohol in excess of these limits may increase the risk for a variety of health issues and increase difficulties with depression and other mental health concerns.

If you want to have an occasional drink while still maintaining a healthy lifestyle, the following guidelines may be of help:

- **Be sensible when socializing.** Limit yourself to one drink with dinner, then switch to non-alcoholic beverages. If you opt to have more than one

drink, be certain to consume a matching amount of water.

- **Never drink and drive.** If you plan to drink when you are away from home, arrange for someone to be the designated driver or take a cab.
- **Set limits.** If you have friends who are heavy drinkers, ask them to respect your choice to not drink as much as they do. You shouldn't have to apologize for choosing not to drink in excess.
- **Don't drink to avoid problems.** If you are having trouble at work or home, talk to a friend or consider seeking counseling or other professional assistance.

Over time, some people may find that they gradually begin to drink more than is healthy. Warning signs that drinking may be getting out of control include:

- Looking forward to a set time of day when you can start drinking.
- Avoiding parties or places where liquor is not served or being concerned that alcohol will not be available when you want it.
- Periodically trying to slow down or stop drinking without success or experiencing symptoms of withdrawal when you do cut back.
- Experiencing legal, financial, workplace, or family problems because of drinking.
- Friends or family members expressing concern about your alcohol use.

If you or someone you care about needs help with handling an addiction to alcohol or another drug, LifeMatters can help. Call 24/7 for confidential assistance.

The above information is for educational purposes only and is not intended to take the place of medical advice.

Source: Krames Staywell and Life Advantages



LifeMatters® services are available 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

To speak with a professional counselor, call 1-800-367-7474.

Visit **LifeMatters** on the Internet at mylifematters.com.

Language assistance services in your preferred spoken and written languages are available at no cost by calling 1-800-367-7474.

Improving Your Digestion

Common digestive complaints — such as diarrhea, constipation, acid reflux, and heartburn — may become more prevalent with age. Some people may find that they have to make changes to their eating habits to avoid discomfort.

Eating a healthy diet that includes plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins and cutting back on fatty and fried foods may help decrease digestive woes. Other ways to improve your digestion include:

- **Drink water.** It is recommended that people drink 6-8 glasses of water per day. If you live in a hot or dry climate or are an active person, you may need to drink more to stay hydrated.
- **Exercise.** Getting regular exercise will help your digestive system to function properly. Most experts recommend a minimum of 30 minutes of exercise 4-5 days a week. If you can't devote a full 30 minutes to exercise, try three 10-minute sessions per day.
- **Cut back on caffeine and alcohol.** Both caffeine and alcohol have a dehydrating effect and may contribute to the physical irritation that causes heartburn or acid reflux.
- **If you smoke, quit.** Smoking contributes to a number of health conditions that may affect digestion. In addition, it dulls the taste buds, which may make you more prone to add excess salt or other spices to your food.
- **Be cautious about using over-the-counter medications.** Some of these medications may actually worsen digestive conditions. Seek your doctor's advice if you need these medications to manage discomfort.



- **Wash your hands before and after cooking a meal.** It is important to wash your hands when preparing food to prevent the spread of bacteria and germs that may cause digestive illness. Use hot water and soap and rub vigorously for at least 20 seconds. Dry your hands with a clean towel.
 - **Keep cooking areas clean.** Wash cutting boards and utensils and clean sinks and counters frequently, especially after handling uncooked meat. Wash dishes in a dishwasher (when possible) to sterilize them.
 - **Cook food properly.** Follow the instructions on the package when cooking poultry, meat, fish, or eggs. Improper cooking may result in food poisoning.
 - **Slow down.** Take the time to chew your food and savor your meals. This will prevent overeating and may help with managing stress, which is a common cause of digestive issues.
 - **Do not eat within three hours of your bedtime.** Laying down too soon after eating may trigger digestive discomfort.
 - **Take bathroom breaks when needed.** Sometimes when people are busy they forget to tend to personal needs. This can disrupt the digestive system and may lead to discomfort.
- If you are having digestive issues on a frequent basis, it is important to talk to your doctor. He or she can look for underlying medical concerns and may be able to pinpoint lifestyle issues that are contributing to the problem, such as stress or excessive caffeine or alcohol use. In addition, your doctor can tell you if the digestive issues are a side effect of a prescribed medication.



Vehicle Maintenance Myths

Over the years, many of us pick up tips and tricks that we think will save gas or cut car maintenance costs. While some of this “common wisdom” is useful, other tips may no longer be valid due to changes in technology. Here are some car-related myths that may be costing you money:

The myth: Replace it all

At one time, filters, spark plugs, and other components wore out at a faster rate than they do today. Rather than having replacements made at random, keep a detailed service record and cross-reference it with your owner’s manual. This will help you to keep track of when different items need to be replaced.

The myth: Substitute other cleaners for windshield wiper fluid

Some people will tell you that you can substitute a different cleaner for windshield wiper fluid. Unfortunately, those other cleaners are likely to strip your car’s finish in the process, so stick with the liquid the manufacturer recommends.

The myth: Winterize or else!

If you live in a place that has extremely cold temperatures, you may need to take special precautions



for the colder months. However, in many places you won’t need to do more than switch to your snow tires (if you use them) and update your winter weather emergency kit.

The myth: Let your car warm up before you drive

Until recently, cars needed to warm up for a bit before the engine could run at optimal efficiency. However, unless you drive a classic car, you are only wasting gas by leaving

your car idle prior to driving. Instead of leaving it sit for a long time, start driving right away and go slowly until your engine comes up to full temperature.

The myth: Flush it

Often, mechanics will offer extra services, such as transmission, radiator, or engine oil flushes. However, on most vehicles these services are rarely needed. Consult your owner’s manual to determine if or when these types of services are necessary.

The myth: Put your car in neutral at a stoplight

In theory, if you put a car with an automatic transmission in neutral at a stoplight, it will decrease strain on the transmission. In reality, shifting into neutral over and over will actually wear out your transmission, leading to a costly repair.

The myth: Top off the brake fluid and forget it

If your vehicle is low on brake fluid, either the fluid is leaking or your brakes are becoming dangerously worn out. Don't wait — get your brakes redone as soon as you are able. At the end of the day, being safe is better (and cheaper) than taking a chance that you might not be able to stop when you need to.

Whenever someone gives you a piece of car advice, research the tips to make sure you're not just creating more expenses down the line. Your car will thank you — and so will your bank account!

Recommended Reading

Start Me Up: A Practical Guide to Understanding Your Vehicle
By Mike Davidson, 2013

If you don't know much about cars, "The Auto Guy," as Mike Davidson is known, can help you fill a vital gap in the knowledge base for car owners. Davidson's tips for preventing problems will help you avoid major repairs. In addition, the book's safety suggestions will put you in a better position to avoid costly accidents.

While this book has sage advice regardless of age or experience level, it is especially recommended for new drivers and their parents. If you fall into one of these categories, consider this book an alternative to "learning the hard way." Taking shortcuts with your vehicle may make sense in the short run, but over the long term it will cost you more.

Car Maintenance Savings Tips

1. Do not use high-octane gas unless your car requires it.
2. Inflate your tires to the level listed in your owner's manual, not the maximum on the tires. This will result in better mileage, less wear, and increased safety.
3. Have your fluid levels checked before every long drive. Change oil on the schedule recommended in your owner's manual.
4. Research online reviews of local mechanics to find the best option. An independent mechanic may charge less and offer the same level of service as a dealer's service department.
5. Get your tires rotated at the frequency recommended in your owner's manual. Most experts recommend this be done approximately every 7,000 miles.
6. Install a vehicle service app for your mobile device to help you keep track of your car's maintenance schedule.
7. Avoid "jackrabbit" driving (rapid acceleration and abrupt braking).
8. Make sure your spare tire is present and in working shape. This may help you avoid needing a tow in the case of a flat tire.
9. Change your own air filter and wiper blades instead of paying a mechanic to do it.

“Always focus on the front windshield and not the rearview mirror.”
~ Colin Powell