Alcohol and IBS

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The Relationship Between Alcohol and IBS

You may be someone that has to run to the bathroom frequently because of cramping and loose stools. Or perhaps, you may often become constipated where you are just miserable. If you enjoy alcoholic beverages often throughout the week, it may be causing you to have irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). If you already have IBS, drinking will aggravate the condition.

Irritable bowel syndrome is a disorder of the intestine that causes it to work improperly. You will not have a "normal" bowel movement; you may have constant episodes of diarrhea each day or suffer from constipation. The intestines may be hypersensitive to foods and spasms of the bowel may result.

IBS and Alcohol

Alcohol can increase the severity of IBS symptoms significantly. It is an irritant to the bowel as it is a toxic substance to the body. Some report that beer is the worst of the types of alcohol to consume. Look for the following if you suspect you have IBS:

- Frequency in bowel movements
- Bloating
- Urge to keep straining to pass stool
- Constipation
- Cramping with defecation
- Abdominal pain
- Tiredness, especially after straining

Tips If You Have to Drink

Many social occasions will invite you to drink, so you feel you are part of the group. However, there are things you can do to participate in the fun but avoid aggravating IBS symptoms while out.

- **If you have to drink, you should eat something with it.** You will want to eat something starchy that can help absorb some of the alcohol you consume, like pizza or pasta. Eat before going out so that you have a full stomach when drinking.
- **Don't mix drinks when out.** You may have heard about this before, but it holds true when it comes to controlling what goes into your mouth. You cannot keep track of all that you are consuming when you mix drinks. The more you drink, the more it is likely you won't be keeping track of the amount you are drinking. Alcohol consumption should be limited to one drink to control IBS symptoms and always eat food when drinking.
- **Drink non-alcoholic alternatives.** You may want to try the non-alcoholic beer offerings at your local bar or grocery store. Find something you may like. You can alternate a drink for a glass of water or seltzer.

- **Go for the lesser of the evils.** Since beer is very likely to upset the digestive tract, opt for something like wine. Nothing carbonated as it may cause irritation. Also, avoid vodka or anything that is higher in alcohol concentration. A cocktail with lots of juice and minimal alcohol would be a better choice than shots.

Protecting Your Insides

- **Hold off on the painkillers.** You will want to take pain medication when you suffer a headache, but you need to be careful what to take. Aspirin and ibuprofen can be damaging to the lining of your stomach so try a Tylenol instead.
- **Drink some tea.** There are many types of tea to drink to soothe your stomach. Chamomile and mint teas are some to try.
- **Take an antacid.** This will help soothe your gastrointestinal tract.