

# Booze and your workout

BY JAMES STARING, LEAD TRAINER, FIT TO LAST.

Most of us will be enjoying a little extra tipple in the final weeks of the year. That doesn't mean we should abandon our regular exercise, but we need to be aware of what alcohol does to our bodies and incorporate that into our exercise sessions.

**“ALCOHOL-INDUCED DEHYDRATION CAN ALSO AFFECT YOUR MOTOR SKILLS, BALANCE, AND COORDINATION”**

James Staring



## DON'T SWEAT IT

You may have heard of sweating out a hangover. It's a myth. Booze dehydrates you. So does exercise. Two plus two isn't zero.

Your brain is 75% water, so even 2% dehydration can affect brain function dramatically. And you need to be thinking clearly. When you're in the gym, you need to decide if a weight is too heavy or if you need longer to rest. If you choose unwisely, you can hurt yourself. Alcohol-induced dehydration can also affect your motor skills, balance, and coordination.

## MOTIVATION

It can be difficult enough to get yourself primed and ready to work out on regular days, but when you add in alcohol, you create an additional hurdle. Does anyone ever want to go to the gym with a hangover? Decreased motivation extends beyond the workout itself. Because nutrition is such an essential part of achieving results, the poor food choices we can make on the back of alcohol consumption can have a tremendous impact.





**“ALCOHOL CAN INTERFERE WITH YOUR METABOLISM”**

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When you drink alcohol, your liver reduces glucose production, prioritising processing alcohol. Glucose is an energy source for exercise, and your workout quality will be reduced if you lack sufficient energy to complete it.

**RECOVERY**

To maintain a healthy lifestyle and achieve health and fitness goals, quality recovery is essential. Alcohol consumption reduces the time you spend in deep sleep, meaning you spend more time in REM and lighter sleep cycles. This is significant because it’s during deep sleep when your body produces hormones that facilitate lean muscle development.

**TIME YOUR WORKOUTS**

You need to allow for alcohol to be fully processed before exercising. An essential part of exercising with a health and fitness goal in mind is consistency. For this reason, if you plan to drink, allow yourself enough time to fully process the alcohol you’ve consumed before you hit the gym (i.e. 48-72 hours). By doing this, you’ll go to the gym ready to perform at your best, and this is how you’ll achieve your goals. ❖

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**METABOLISM**

**ALCOHOL CAUSES METABOLIC ISSUES ON TWO FRONTS:**

**1 Low blood sugar:**

alcohol can interfere with your metabolism by increasing insulin secretion. Increased insulin secretion leads to low blood sugar. As you need sugar in your bloodstream to provide energy to exercise, when alcohol is in your system, you can expect to feel sluggish while you work out.

**2 Prioritising an unwanted energy source:**

when you exercise, your body has a variety of energy sources available for fuel. The most desirable energy source is stored fat. When your liver processes alcohol, your body will have ethanol in its system. Because ethanol is toxic in large quantities, your body will prioritise burning it as a fuel source instead of stored fat.