



Alcohol and sport don't mix well

If you take your sport seriously, you need to wise up on the effects of alcohol.

Alcohol and sport are not good mixers. Alcohol slows down reaction times, increases body heat loss and reduces endurance. If you have consumed alcohol 24 hours before exercising you're more likely to develop muscle cramps

Endurance

The blood sugar your body needs for energy is produced by the liver releasing glucose into the bloodstream. Alcohol reduces your body's ability to produce this sugar, so you have less energy and less endurance capacity.

Body heat loss

If you've ever had that feeling of running hot and cold after a big night, you'll recognise this symptom. First, alcohol in your system makes you feel feverish, then you lose body heat too fast, leading possibly to hypothermia. The longer you play or train, or the colder the weather, the greater the risk.

Reaction times

The relaxant properties of alcohol can continue well after you've finished drinking. Alcohol affects the central nervous system and slows down the information processing ability of the brain. This in turn affects your reactions, coordination, accuracy and balance - all the things most important for staying on top in any sport.

Sport injuries and muscle cramps

Alcohol increases the bleeding and swelling around soft tissue injuries (sprains, bruises and cuts, which are the most common sport injuries) so you take longer to recover. Alcohol also masks pain, so you might delay getting treatment, and rapid treatment can make all the difference to a speedy recovery.

If you've been injured, avoid alcohol - at least until you've had treatment.

Muscle cramps

During exercise, your muscles burn sugar, producing lactic acid. Too much lactic acid leads to muscle fatigue and cramps.

The alcohol left in your system after a few drinks the night before contributes to a bigger build up of lactic acid, and dramatically increases the risk of you cramping up.