Q: How does mixing alcohol with over the counter (OTC) and prescription drugs affect your body?

A: The combination of alcohol with any other drug is risky. Some substances can increase your intoxication, some can mask the effects of alcohol, and some combinations are fatal. Even the caffeine in an energy drink, soda, or cup of coffee changes the effect of alcohol on your body.

**Xanax** - The effects of the combination of alcohol and Xanax range from mild discomfort to death. Both Xanax and alcohol are central nervous system depressants, and when taken together they create "potentiation" and the effect of the drugs taken simultaneously is much greater than the effect when they are taken separately. When combined with alcohol, Xanax can induce panic attacks and increase mood swings. The risk of coma or death from respiratory and cardiac failure is also significantly greater.

**Tylenol** - The combination of Tylenol (acetaminophen) and alcohol is responsible for almost 40% of all acute liver failure in the use. Be careful, other OTC drugs such as Dayquil, Excedrin and Robitussin also contain acetaminophen. Try taking aspirin or ibuprofen instead of Tylenol for pain relief if you are planning on drinking alcohol.

**Adderall** - Adderall is commonly prescribed to patients with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) to help them maintain focus. However, it is often abused and misused. When taken with alcohol, it decreases our body's perception of drunkenness but increases the feeling of euphoria. Although the effect of low doses of Adderall and alcohol are still unknown, high doses of the two substances are reported to be fatal.

**Birth Control Pills** - Birth Control Pills and other medications containing estrogen slow the rate at which the body processes alcohol and therefore cause a higher BAC.

**Caffeine** - Caffeine is a stimulant and alcohol is a depressant, therefore caffeine can mask the effect of alcohol and make one feel less drunk then they actually are. Caffeine does NOT cancel out the effects of alcohol. The popular drink, Four Loko, has recently been dubbed "blackout in a can" because of its high alcohol and caffeine content and reports of hospitalization after its consumption. Eliminate drinking caffeinated beverages while consuming alcohol.

Sources:  
- Planned Parenthood