Q: “Beer before liquor, never sicker”?

There is a common myth that mixing alcohol, or drinking different alcohols in a particular order can either make you too drunk or cause a nasty hangover the next day. Some experts say that because the carbonation in beer can irritate your stomach lining it can cause alcohol to be absorbed more quickly\(^1\). While this may be the case, it doesn’t have a great enough affect to actually make a difference. What causes excess intoxication and sickness is not the type of alcohol that is consumed but instead the quantity. Darker alcohols and cheaper alcohols can sometimes cause worse hangovers because of the congeners produced during fermentation including acetone, acetaldehyde, fusel oil and tannins\(^2\). It should be noted that all alcohol can affect others differently.

Q: Do different types of alcohol give you a different drunk?

Another common myth about different types of alcohol is that they give you different kinds of drunk. I’ve heard more than one person talk about how tequila makes them wild or how they just love a wine drunk. In reality, alcohol is alcohol, and there is no scientific data supporting the idea that different alcohols make you behave differently\(^3\). One of the reasons for this perceived difference could be the amount of alcohol you are consuming or the situation. If you are taking shots of tequila, you are consuming more alcohol, so you may have a wilder night than if you are casually sipping on wine.

To avoid a hangover:

In order to avoid getting too drunk or hungover the next day you can make sure that you are keeping track of your drinks. A good way to know that you are accurately keeping track of how much you have had to drink is to use standard drink sizes. Different types of alcoholic drinks have varying percentages of alcohol, so a serving size of wine is much different than a serving size of beer. You can make sure that you are staying hydrated during a night of drinking by alternating glasses of water with alcoholic beverages. It is also important to make sure that you have eaten before a night of drinking; this will help slow the rate of absorption and help to prevent you from getting sick.

~Delia Tyrrell ‘17, PHE

\(^1\) http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/07/health/07real.html?_r=0
\(^2\) http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20140428‐does‐wine‐beer‐huge‐hangover
\(^3\) http://www.universitytimes.ie/?p=25051