Quick facts

• Alcohol slows down the activity in the brain and the nervous system.
• Alcoholic drinks get their taste from other substances that are used to make them. For example, beer gets its taste from malt, wine from the type of grape used.
• Alcohol can be called a food because it provides energy. It does not contain protein or vitamins.
• Alcohol does not need to be digested in the stomach. It passes straight into the bloodstream.
• Alcohol is absorbed directly into the bloodstream through the walls of the stomach and small intestine. It is then quickly distributed to all parts of the body, including the brain.
• The liver is the main organ of the body responsible for removing alcohol from the bloodstream.

The short term effects of using alcohol may include:

− relaxation
− reduced concentration
− lack of coordination and slower reflexes
− loss of inhibitions and increased confidence
− flushed appearance
− blurred vision
− slurred speech
− intense moods e.g. aggression, elation, depression
− headache
− sleepiness
− nausea and vomiting
− at high doses – coma and death.

The long term effects of alcohol use may include:

− dependence (alcoholism)
− damage to the heart, stomach and brain
− damage to the liver - cirrhosis, hepatitis and cancer
− weight gain
− sexual impotence and a reduction in fertility
− concentration and short term memory problems
− depression
− family and relationship problems
− poor work performance
− legal and financial problems.

For more information, visit the following interactive websites.
Systems of body and parts of brain/ Interactive body