Alcohol

WHAT IS IT?
A chemical called ethanol. It is made from fruit and grains. Ethanol is a central nervous system depressant that triggers a wide range of physical, emotional and behavioral changes in users, determined by dose and reflected in the blood-alcohol levels of a drinker. It is most widely called a drug in the United States. Although it appears to act as a stimulant, it actually is a depressant which dulls the senses and reflexes. Alcohol overdose can result in unconsciousness and dangerously slowed breathing and heart rate which can lead to coma or death. Contests to see who can drink the most or the fastest are hazardous because they can cause alcohol poisoning or overdose.

WHAT CAN HAPPEN TO YOUR BODY?

AT FIRST:

- Heart beats faster and weaker.
- Become clumsy and stagger.
- Get confused and can't concentrate.
- Feel sick to your stomach. Vomit.
- Mood changes quickly to violence or depression.

OVER TIME:

- Permanent liver, heart and brain damage.
- Severe digestive problems.
- Vulnerable to many serious diseases.
- Liver cancer.
- High blood pressure.
- Alcoholism.

MIXING ALCOHOL AND DRUGS:
Mixing alcohol and other drugs can intensify the effect and can sometimes cause accidental overdose. There have been deaths from combining alcohol and other depressants such as tranquilizers and narcotics. Mixing alcohol with stimulants such as crank and cocaine can also cause serious physical and emotional problems.

DURATION:
Depends on the amount used. Since the liver is only able to metabolize a fixed amount of alcohol, which is about 1 regular sized drink per hour (up to one ounce), consumption above that level causes intoxication and increased difficulties.

TRENDS:
After continual increases in consumption since the 1930s, use among adults began to
level off in the 1980s and even declined in the first half of the 1990s. Alcohol is associated with a substantial proportion of human violence.

**DEMOGRAPHICS:**
All socioeconomic and ethnic groups in society are affected, but overuse is concentrated among younger age groups. There has been an increase in heavy drinking in the past 20 years among individuals ages 21-34 for both genders.