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# Xanax and Alcohol: The Dangers of Drinking on Xanax

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## Xanax Addiction Self-Assessment Quiz



# Xanax and alcohol both have a relaxing effect. When taken together, they can become dangerous, causing oversedation and even fatal overdose.

Drug overdoses are, unfortunately, a common reality in the United States. As of 2019, the fatal drug [overdose rate](#) was 21.6 per 100,000 people. In 2020, [12,290 overdose deaths](#) in the United States involved benzodiazepines, including Xanax.

[Benzodiazepines](#) like Xanax can be addictive, despite being prescription medications with legitimate uses. The amount needed to suffer a [fatal overdose on Xanax](#) by itself is considerably high. It is much easier to overdose on this medication when combined with other substances, such as alcohol.

## Can You Drink on Xanax?

When combined, Xanax and alcohol can cause various side effects, some of which can be fatal. This is why [experts recommend](#) avoiding taking Xanax and alcohol together. Even if you consider yourself a responsible drinker and you take Xanax exactly as prescribed, you should be aware of the dangers of combining Xanax with alcohol.

## Xanax and Alcohol Interactions

[Xanax is a prescription](#) anti-anxiety medication. It's also sold in the generic form under its chemical name, [alprazolam](#). Xanax is [classified](#) as a benzodiazepine, meaning that it has a sedative effect. Benzodiazepine medications are commonly prescribed to treat anxiety, panic disorder and occasionally [alcohol withdrawal](#) or seizures. Their goal is to slow down the activity of the central nervous system and produce a calming effect. Alcohol also has a sedative effect on the body, which is why the makers of Xanax [warn against mixing](#) the prescription medication with alcohol.

Alcohol and Xanax increase the activity of [gamma-aminobutyric acid \(GABA\)](#), an [inhibitory neurotransmitter](#) in the brain. This neurotransmitter is responsible for slowing the activity of the nervous system, causing a sedative effect. When these two depressants are mixed, oversedation occurs, which is a serious problem that may result in death.

Xanax intensifies the symptoms of alcohol and vice versa. When taken together, alcohol and Xanax become more potent than if you take either of them on their own. As a result, you're at risk of excessive sedation, dangerous accidents, respiratory depression, cardiac issues and loss of consciousness.

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Other depressants that are commonly mixed with Xanax include:



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**Combining drugs can increase the side effects of Xanax, causing severe drowsiness, fatigue, weakness and clumsiness. Mixing Xanax with other substances also increases the risk of breathing difficulties,**

unconsciousness and unintentional death.

# Xanax and Alcohol Side Effects

Alcohol and Xanax reduce the overall activity in the brain, slowing signals in the central nervous system. When taken separately, they both have a relaxing effect on users. But together, the effects of each drug build upon one another.

## Physical Side Effects of Mixing Xanax and Alcohol

- Drowsiness
- Dizziness
- Increased risk for overdose
- Slowed or difficulty breathing
- Impaired motor control
- Unusual behavior
- Memory problems
- Coma
- Death

## Psychological Side Effects of Mixing Xanax and Alcohol

- Increased sedation and intoxication
- Increased feelings of hostility
- Increased anxiety

## Behavioral Side Effects of Mixing Xanax and Alcohol

- Aggression
- Lack of control
- Irritability

With these side effects in mind, drinking alcohol while taking Xanax is generally considered unsafe. While some people may combine the two substances and never suffer any side effects, others can experience a fatal overdose, so no safe level of alcohol use has been established for people taking Xanax. This means that you should not drink beer, wine or liquor while taking Xanax.

## How Long After Taking Xanax Can I Drink?

You may have taken Xanax and be wondering how long you have to wait before you can drink alcohol. It is important to know how long Xanax or alprazolam can remain in the body to answer this question. Xanax has an average [half-life of 11.2 hours](#) with a range of 6.3–26.9 hours in healthy adults. The half-life is how long it

takes for half of the medication to leave the body. It takes about [4–5 half-lives to clear 94 to 97% of a drug](#) from the body.

While on average it would take 56 hours after a single dose to remove most of the drug from your system, there are many factors that can affect how long Xanax remains in your system. Factors that increase the time it takes for Xanax to leave your body [include](#):

- **Age:** Older adults will experience a longer elimination period, with an average half-life of 16.3 hours.
- **Liver function:** Adults with alcoholic liver disease have an average Xanax half-life of 19.7 hours.
- **Obesity:** Overweight adults have an average half-life of 21.8 hours.

[Certain drugs](#) such as ketoconazole, itraconazole, nefazodone, fluvoxamine and erythromycin can also increase Xanax levels in the body. Xanax XR extended-release tablets release the medication slowly over time and prolong how long Xanax stays in your system.

You should wait until most of the Xanax has cleared your system before drinking alcohol. The closer to the last dose of Xanax you drink alcohol, the greater the risk of severe side effects from combining alcohol with Xanax.

## How Long After Drinking Can I Take Xanax?

The half-life of alcohol is [4–5 hours](#). This is the time it takes your body to get rid of half the amount of alcohol in a drink. It takes [4–5 half-lives to clear 94 to 97% of alcohol](#) from the body. This means that most of the alcohol you consumed should be out of your system in 16 to 25 hours.

Factors that affect how quickly your body can clear alcohol [include](#):

- **Biological sex:** Women have fewer enzymes to metabolize alcohol than men.
- **Weight:** Body weight can affect how concentrated the alcohol is in your body.
- **Medications:** Certain medications may affect how your body clears alcohol.
- **Genetics:** Certain populations have fewer enzymes needed to eliminate alcohol from the body.

You should avoid taking Xanax too close to the time you last drank alcohol. It is important to consult a medical professional about any medications you may be taking and the risk of side effects with alcohol.

## Xanax and Alcohol Overdose

It takes a relatively high dosage of Xanax to cause an [overdose](#), but it is possible to overdose, especially if Xanax is combined with alcohol or opiates. Both alcohol and Xanax act as CNS depressants. When combined, they can [lead to life-threatening respiratory depression and coma](#).

[Xanax overdose symptoms](#) may include:

- Extreme drowsiness

- Lightheadedness
- Loss of balance or coordination
- Confusion
- Blurred vision
- Muscle weakness
- Difficulty breathing
- Fainting
- Coma

**Drug overdose can be fatal. If you suspect someone is experiencing an overdose, call 911 immediately. Do NOT be afraid to seek help. If you do not have access to a phone contact [Web Poison Control Services](#) for online assistance.**

**Related Topic:** [Xanax Overdose](#)

## Getting Help for Xanax and Alcohol Abuse

If you or a loved one is mixing Xanax and alcohol, seek help immediately from an addiction treatment facility. Treatment for co-occurring [alcohol](#) and [Xanax abuse](#) often requires a period of [medically supervised detox](#).

If you've been misusing alcohol and Xanax over an extended period of time, you may have become dependent on them. When you stop, you may experience withdrawal symptoms that range from mild discomfort to [dangerous medical conditions](#) like seizures and coma.

Attempting to [self-detox at home](#) or quit cold turkey is never advised, especially if you've been taking Xanax or drinking heavily for a long time. [Medically assisted detox](#) helps minimize the risk of experiencing potentially dangerous symptoms. A team of medical professionals will provide 24-hour care and provide medications to help ease withdrawal symptoms if necessary.

Entering an [inpatient addiction treatment program](#) may seem overwhelming, but it gives you the best chance at success. Not only will you be monitored by a team of medical professionals around the clock, but you'll also receive long-term care that will provide you with tools to stay healthy and clean.

Recovery is possible, but the first step involves getting the help that you need. There's nothing wrong with admitting that you're struggling and need help. While taking this step is often scary, it's the first step toward a better, happier, and more satisfying life in recovery.

If you have questions about treatment for alcohol and Xanax abuse, drinking and Xanax or mixing Xanax with alcohol, [The Recovery Village](#) can help.



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