

Mental Notes

A Monthly Newsletter

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SAFER DRINKING DURING MARDI GRAS

how to reduce risk and still have fun

by Jason Ferris, MSW Intern

Mardi Gras is here! We're all getting ready for the whirlwind of parades, crowds, food, and parties that accompany this unique festival. For each of us, Mardi Gras means different things: time spent with friends and family, a vacation from school and work, a celebration of New Orleans' heritage, a sign that New Orleans is rebuilding. For many, Mardi Gras also entails drinking alcohol – in some cases, excessively. To insure that your Mardi Gras is fun, safe, and filled with *positive* memories, follow these guidelines:

1. Don't drink unless you are 21. Yes, we have to say this. The drinking age in Louisiana is 21 years old. While underage drinking is common on college campuses, that doesn't mean it's a good thing. The police department is on high alert during Mardi Gras and underage drinkers could wind up in jail.



2. If you're drinking, be sure to eat beforehand. Drinking on an empty stomach allows people to become more intoxicated more quickly, as well as making them sick and hung-over the following day. On the other hand, having food in your tummy slows the body's absorption of alcohol. According to Dr. Harris B. Stratyner, an addiction specialist at Mount Sinai Medical Center, the best foods to have are those rich in proteins, fats, and dense carbohydrates.

3. Alternate alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic ones. In-between any beer, wine, or mixed drink, add a glass of water or juice. This will not only allow the body to absorb the alcohol more gradually, but will reduce dehydration. Some

of the worst symptoms of a hangover are caused by dehydration.

4. Avoid "energy drinks." Despite popular belief, coffee, energy drinks, and other highly-caffeinated beverages do not prevent you from experiencing the effects of alcohol. Caffeine may make you feel more awake, but the effect that alcohol has on your reflexes, for example, will remain.

5. Stay on the alert. Alcohol can reduce inhibitions and impede good judgment. Drinking to intoxication might make you a sitting duck for muggings and worse. Don't take any chances with your well-being or the well-being of those around you.

6. Finally, as if we had to say it, don't drink and drive! With the horrendous traffic during Mardi Gras, you hopefully won't be trying to drive anyway. But if you do, make sure you're below the legal limit of 0.08% of blood alcohol. For a 150 lb. person drinking 1.5 ounces of alcohol (the equivalent of one beer or glass of wine) per half hour, this means no more than three drinks (California Dept. of Alcohol and Drugs). If needed, have a designated driver to chauffeur you to parades, parties, and other events.

Want to learn more about safer alcohol consumption? UNO Counseling Services and Student Health Services will be conducting an Alcohol Awareness Screening on February 17 under Earl K. Long Library breezeway. Counselors will be available to review screenings and provide helpful information. If you believe you may have a problem with alcohol or other substance use, help is near. Contact Counseling Services or Student Health Services for help and support.

SCREENINGS

- Anxiety - Feb. 4
- Career Exploration - Feb. 10
- Alcohol Awareness - Feb. 17
- Test Anxiety - Feb. 26
- Stress Management - Mar. 3
- Depression - Mar. 18
- Alcohol Awareness - Apr. 4
- Test Anxiety - Apr. 14

Location:

Earl K. Long Library Breezeway

Time:

10:00AM to 2:00PM

All screenings are open to students, faculty, and staff. Counselors will be present to interpret screening instruments and provide information.

RELAXATION SESSIONS

- Feb. 12, 26 - 3:00PM
- February 18 - 1:00PM
- March 4 - 1:00PM
- March 12, 26 - 3:00PM
- April 9, 23 - 3:00PM
- April 15 - 1:00PM
- May 7, 21 - 3:00PM

Location:

Kirschman Hall 401

WORKSHOPS

- Assertiveness - Feb. 16
- Conflict Resolution - Mar. 10
- Stress Management - Mar. 17
- Study Skills - April 13
- ADD/ADHD - April 22

Location:

Kirschman Hall 401

Time:

12:30-1:30PM

For disability-related accommodations for these events, please contact Adrian Péré in Counseling Services at 280-6683.