



Why *don't* you
drink?

I have often been asked this
question.



Why don't you drink?

I have often been asked this question

- by a Christian patient, referring to the wine used in the Communion service,
- by an Italian host, who valued Italian wine as a cultural asset,
- and by many kind people who wanted to give me a bottle of wine to say thank you.

I hope that this brochure will answer this question, that it will remove ignorance and deception, and that alcohol will be exposed for what it is: one of the most dangerous drugs on earth!

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Which is Worst: Alcohol, LSD, Marijuana, Nicotine, or Heroin?

Results of a Scientific Study in England

Between 7,000 and 8,000 people die in Europe every year from the consumption of illegal drugs. And in Germany alone the death toll is more than 40,000 each year from alcohol consumption. Between 110,000 and 140,000 die annually from smoking!

In the medical journal, *The Lancet*, British scientists introduced a study about the dangerousness of various drugs. In it, they investigated factors such as the effects on personal health, addictive potential, and social harm caused by twenty different drugs and assembled a ranking list from their analysis. The results speak for themselves:

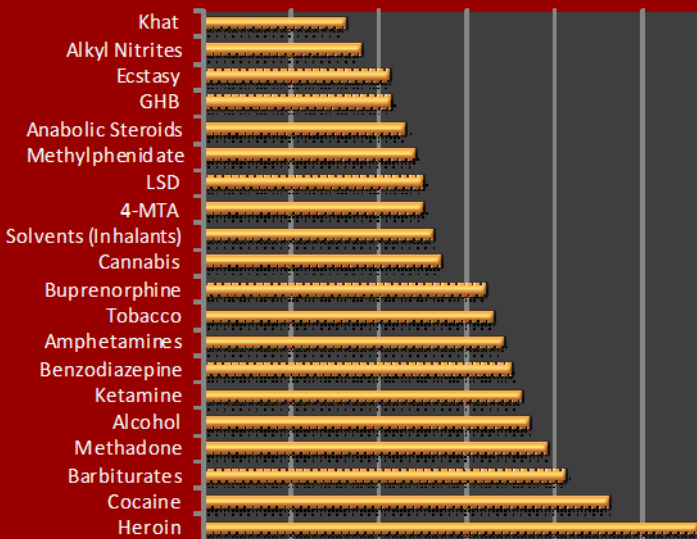


Heroin, cocaine, barbiturates and methadone are the four most dangerous drugs. Alcohol ranks fifth on the list—more dangerous than LSD, Ecstasy, or marijuana! But because it is legally available, alcohol has never been officially classified as a drug.

The authors of the study demand a change of approach to the drug problem: from a scientific perspective there is no reason why alcohol and tobacco should not fall under the jurisdiction of the drug laws. “Every drug is dangerous, even those that people know, love, and imbibe every day.”

(Spiegel online March 23, 2007)

■ Ranking list of the most dangerous drugs



A Drink With Culture



Our forefathers drank mead—an alcoholic drink. And beer and wine are simply a part of our culture—in daily life, in daily conversation—from the cheapest, most readily available to the most expensive, choicest select wines.

And in other countries, like Jamaica for example, marijuana is a part of the culture. Everyone smokes it, chews it, or uses it in some form. What is really so bad about marijuana or cannabis?

In the Andean countries many people live from the cultivation of coca plants (used to derive cocaine). It has been a part of the simple life of farmers there for hundreds of years. What's so bad about that? Why is the circulation of cocaine fought against so fiercely?

Both marijuana and coca are stimulants which are woven into the culture of certain countries.

But both of these substances are classified as illegal drugs in other countries. The trading, possession, or transport of these drugs is partially or totally forbidden—and quite rightly so, because the damage marijuana and cocaine inflict on health is indisputable and extensive.

But is alcohol any different? In fact, there is no reason why alcohol should be permitted in almost every country while other drugs are forbidden.

Alcohol is in many respects more dangerous than cannabis and in the ranking list of dangerous drugs it is only a little below cocaine.

So would a general alcohol ban make sense? There are many clear reasons why it would. And why should it not be forbidden? In America there was a time when alcohol was forbidden—the so-called “prohibition years.”



The Defeat of the Native Americans



It was not by the use of rifles but by “firewater” that the Native Americans were defeated. A proud and confident people were humiliated, demoralized, and degraded by the white settlers. And one of the most effective weapons used was alcohol.

In 1990, 1.5 million Native Americans lived on reservations, There, they are heavily supported by the government. Many of them are unemployed. Their original livelihood—hunting and farming—has been taken away from them. These have been replaced by alcohol.

Eighty percent of the people living on the reservations are alcoholics.

Three out of four deaths on the reservations are connected with alcohol, and in 1990 the average life expectancy was only 47 years. Seven times more babies are born with damage due to alcohol than the national average in America. (Addiction Report 3/90).

Why is such a dangerous drug permitted, subsidized, and even considered valuable, when it has brought only misery, misfortune, and the destruction of individuals, families, and entire races?

Alcohol's damaging potential is only a little less than that of cocaine.



The Great Experiment: The “Prohibition Years” in the USA



Between 1919 and 1933 the production, transportation, and sale of alcoholic beverages was forbidden by law in the USA. These years are referred to as “the great experiment” by historians. Was it a failure?

The black market, smuggling, and drug criminality (with alcohol as the drug) rose rapidly during this time. A few people gathered tremendous fortunes. The gangster boss Al Capone is said to have amassed more than 100 million dollars in 1927 by trading with alcohol and other illegal substances.

Why was alcohol legalized again 14 years later? Because the government was ill-prepared for the sharp increase in criminality which resulted. The economy needed a push, and alcohol trade promised great gains, jobs, and tax income. The presidential elections were won through the lifting of the ban on alcohol.

So were the years without alcohol a failure?

Alcohol consumption was drastically reduced from 9.8 liters of pure alcohol per person per year in 1909, to just 3.7 liters by 1933. Rape and violent crime had become rare events. The misery in many families was reduced. Liver cirrhosis and other diseases that result from alcohol consumption had reached an all-time low.

The prohibition years were in no way a failure if their beneficial effects on health and positive influence on family life are considered. But because they were implemented without adequate preparation, the movement was doomed to fail under the pressure of criminality and the economic crisis. As a result, trading of alcoholic beverages was again permitted in 1934.



The Russian Tragedy



The average life expectancy of the Russian population today is just 58 years for men (compared to 76 years in Germany), and 72 years for women (compared to 82 years in Germany). Consequently, most Russian men die before reaching the age of retirement.

The major cause is not poverty or a lack of education—it is alcohol. Of all the deaths among working men almost 50% are due to alcohol.

In one chemical factory, for instance, between 75% and 90% of lost work time has been traced to the use of alcohol.

Russia is a civilized country—it is one of the greatest industrial nations of the world—but it is a slave to drug dependence.

In 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev attempted to limit the consumption of alcohol by state intervention. He was successful. The life expectancy of men increased to five years more than it is today. But the state lacked the money which it had gained through the sale of alcohol.

Illegal distillation and the pressing need of capital led to the legalization of the drug again in 1988. Within a short time alcohol consumption rose once more, while life expectancy decreased. More people died from liver cirrhosis, coronary diseases, car accidents, and suicide. Violent crime increased.

Changes in the causes of death in Russia

Cause	1987	1990	1992
Trauma and Poisoning	147 600	189 300	257 200
Suicide	33 900	39 200	46 100
Murder	11 300	21 100	33 900
Alcohol Poisoning	11 700	16 100	26 200

This is why alcohol is listed as one of the most dangerous drugs and occupies the fifth place in the ranking list of drugs. (*The Lancet*, June 16, 2007, Alcohol and Alcoholism Vol. 34, 1999.)

Children



“Ever since I can remember, my mother has had a problem with alcohol. Depending on her current emotions alcohol will drive her to aggression, unnatural cheerfulness, or absolute desperation.

“Being with her made life a round of continual fear, insecurity, and neglect. Everything centered on the one important thing in her life—alcohol. Even as children, my siblings and I did everything we could to try and force her to give up drinking and distract her from the thing we hated so much, but which she loved more than anything. Threats, pleading, crying—nothing helped. And so I had only contempt for her.”

“And even as an adult the results of growing up in such a home are still visible: fear, insecurity, dishonesty, the desperate search for recognition, fear of conflict, and even physical sickness.

“This contempt was later redirected to myself and my peers. My siblings and I were drawn more and more into problems of addiction. But worst of all is the roles that I have learned to play. What I learned in my “family” remains, even though I am now an adult.

“I never wanted to be what my mother was; yet I am terrified to discover that I can still be an “alcoholic,” even though I don’t drink a drop of alcohol. I am insecure, neglect myself, despise myself, and time and again do all I can to gain the esteem of others.”

A Student

Types of Alcoholism

Alcoholism is revealed in many different ways. The various types of alcoholics can be described as follows. Which kind of a drinker are you?



Problem drinker: This type of person reaches for the bottle when difficulties arise.

Habitual drinker: This type drinks every day, for example a pint of beer or two glasses of wine. This person is already an alcoholic.

Plateau alcoholic: If the amount of alcohol in this person's blood falls below a certain level, they will suffer from withdrawal symptoms: their hands shake and they cannot concentrate. These people usually drink in the mornings, for example at a newspaper stand.

■ **Periodic drinker:** This person often drinks nothing for days or even weeks at a time. But at a party or some other occasion they drink to such an excess that they ruin their lives and that of their families.

■ **“Gamma” alcoholic:** This type only drinks in the evenings or on weekends, but then they drink a lot. They know that they overstep the limit but are unable to stop themselves from doing so.



Think about your friends and acquaintances for a moment. How widespread is their use of alcohol and alcoholism?

Exxon Valdez—The Greatest Oil Catastrophe in North America

On 24 March, 1989, the oil tanker Exxon Valdez ran aground off the coast of Alaska. 260,000 barrels of oil leaked out of the 301 m long tanker (1 barrel = 159 liters). 1,770 km of coastline were polluted with oil. The 42-year-old captain, Joseph Hazelwood, lay asleep in his cabin at the time of the disaster. Radio contact with the coastguards shortly after the accident confirmed that Hazelwood was under the influence of alcohol. Investigating officers who went on board the Exxon Valdez hours later could still smell alcohol on his breath. (Wikipedia.)



Skewed!

The death of a heroin victim in a small town creates fear in its citizens—and rightly so.

Deaths and serious injuries resulting from traffic accidents are reported on a weekly basis in the district newspapers. The TÜV (Technical Control Board) in Germany estimate that every eighth traffic-related casualty is due to alcohol. But hardly anyone notices that—and wrongfully so. (*German Federal Agency for Statistics: Traffic accidents in 2003.*)



Everyday!

An inebriated worker turns on a machine while his colleague is repairing it; a director of a bank signs papers in a drunken condition; a member on a works committee of a large tire company throws himself in front of a travelling train. These are only a few examples of alcoholism that I have encountered in my work with addiction.

The Dubious Blessing of Red Wine

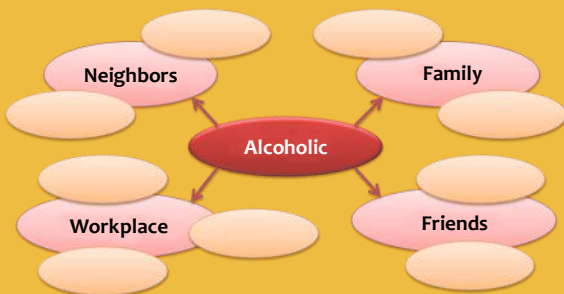


Are small quantities of alcohol healthy? According to a French study, one glass of red wine (20 g alcohol) per day is recommended in order to raise the life expectancy.

- 20 g alcohol is enough to risk losing your driving license;
- 20 g alcohol daily is enough to cause liver cirrhosis in 50% of all women;
- 20 g alcohol inhibits the ability to react appropriately because it impedes the transmission of nerve impulses;
- Alcohol is not just a problem for the individual; it is a problem for society.
- Among any group of ten people who drink moderately (20 g alcohol), at least one of them is in great danger of becoming an alcoholic;
- This one person ruins the life of his family, loses his job, causes accidents, and raises children who suffer for the rest of their lives from the trauma they experienced in their childhood;

This means that 20 g of alcohol in a group of ten people is enough to ruin a group of four people (the alcoholic and his family) socially and psychologically; to be a burden financially and socially to ten people (at the workplace); and to give a continual illustration of misery and neglect to the neighbors or even to a whole village.

Alcohol is not just a drug that ruins individuals, it ruins a whole society.



But we love our drugs. That is why more than 80% of the grape harvest is used for wine production—only 10% of the grapes are eaten fresh, and the remaining 10% are used for grape juice. Whatever is good in red wine comes from the grape, not from the alcohol. It is just as available in grape juice.



Use of the Grape Harvest

- 80% - Wine Production
- 10% - Grape Juice
- 10% - Food

Grabbing the Bull by the Horns



There have been a lot of ideas about how the incidence of lung cancer might be reduced: lectures, health presentations, and health courses have all been tried. And great efforts have also been taken to reduce the number of heart attacks.

Then came the smoking ban in public places and institutions in order to protect second-hand smokers. Whether in Scotland, Italy, or the USA, the results were dramatic. In Scotland, for example, the number of heart attacks dropped by 17% within one year.

- *Following a smoking prohibition in January 2005, the number of people under 60 who suffered from a heart attack in the Piedmont region of Italy, fell by 11%. Before this the number had continued to increase for several years.*
- *In Pueblo, Colorado, USA, there were 27% less heart attacks in the year after smoking was banned.*
- *In the township of Helena in Montana, USA, the number of heart attacks was cut by as much as 40% after smoking was prohibited there in 2002. When a judge permitted smoking again, six months later, the number of heart attacks rose to its previous level.*

(Spiegel online 19.9.2007.)

If alcohol consumption was drastically reduced by law, then liver diseases, cancer, high blood pressure, many other diseases, and violent crime would all be significantly reduced.



“But wine is used in the Communion...”



When Jesus took the Communion Supper with His disciples it was just a few hours before He was taken captive in Gethsemane. Everything was escalating towards the final events in His life. Jesus Himself knew what was coming, and He did everything He could so that He and His disciples would be prepared for the interrogation, the mockery, the whipping, and finally the crucifixion. And when He was on the cross He refused to drink the vinegar offered Him. He would not permit His reasoning powers to be clouded in any way.

“Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, pressing him to your bottle, even to make him drunk, that you may look on his nakedness!” *Habakkuk 2:15.*

Would Jesus really have given His disciples alcohol to drink shortly before the greatest trial of their lives? Peter denied Him, Judas betrayed Him, all the disciples left Him, and He Himself was tried to the uttermost. In the face of such a challenge nobody would give their friends alcohol to drink.

How could Jesus have expected His disciples to remain awake in the garden of Gethsemane if He had previously given them alcohol?

Furthermore, the wine was also a symbol, just as the bread was. The bread had to be unleavened (in other words, unfermented), both in the Passover as well as in the Communion Supper of the New Testament, for it was a symbol of the purity of the life of Christ. The wine was to be just as pure—unfermented—for it was also a symbol of the life of Jesus Christ.

A wise proverb in the Old Testament warns against the effect of wine. “Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things.” *Proverbs 23:31–33*.

Such a drink is not fitting for the Lord’s Supper—the most solemn event in Christian life.

Alcoholic Content of Various Drinks



Drink	Alcoholic content	Quantity	Pure alcohol
Wine	approx. 10 Vol. %	0,2 l	ca. 16,0 g
Beer	approx. 5 Vol. %	0,2 l	ca. 8,0 g
Sparkling wine, dry	approx. 10 Vol. %	0,2 l	ca. 16,0 g
Vermouth	approx. 18 Vol. %	0,2 l	ca. 28,8 g
Advocaat	approx. 20 Vol. %	0,2 l	ca. 32,0 g
Whiskey	approx. 50 Vol. %	0,2 l	ca. 80,0 g

Vol. % = ml of pure alcohol in 100 ml liquid

1 ml pure alcohol = 0.8 g

(German Institution Against the Dangers of Addiction)

One more piece of information:

A pint of beer contains about 20 g of alcohol—

a glass of wine (250 ml) also contains 20 g.



This quantity, consumed on a regular basis, is sufficient to cause liver cirrhosis in women in 50% of all cases. For men, less than 60 g of alcohol is sufficient to cause the same result. Two pints of beer considerably raise the risk of diseases that arise from alcohol consumption. A habitual drinker is therefore extremely at risk.

A Life of Tragedy— Just Escaped



“My alcohol addiction began quite “harmlessly.” Early in my youth I began to drink a small glass now and again, but not regularly. I thought that as long as it stayed within limits, a little alcohol would do me no harm. That was the generally accepted opinion.

“After a while though, I began to drink regularly and eventually became addicted to it. My thoughts centered more and more on alcohol. My hands trembled if I did not have a certain level of alcohol in my blood. Three times I tried to take my life. My family suffered from my unpredictable outbursts of rage. I smashed our furniture to pieces, yelled at my wife and children, and was often uncontrollable.

“I was in a continual struggle between self-condemnation and pride.

“My reason told me that I must stop drinking, but my addiction was stronger. Again and again I tried to break free. I would set myself a limit: ‘only x amount per day’—but I regularly overstepped the mark. I wanted to stop, but I was not able.

“I finally found help with a Christian doctor. He pointed out that only God could really free me from my addiction. We often prayed together and I brought my alcohol problem to God, prayed for deliverance, and was able to accept it by faith. After this experience my desire for alcohol completely disappeared.

“Of course, temptations to drink did come up now and again. But at such times I called on God again for help, and He gave me the strength to stay firm.

“And today, many years later, I can testify that through God’s help I am still ‘dry.’”

G.D.

Conclusion

Why don't you drink?

On the previous pages enough evidence has been presented to show what alcohol really is—a drug.

People who are addicted are just as nice as anybody else. But when the addiction is put in question or opposed, or if it can no longer be satisfied, its real character is revealed in nervousness, thoughtlessness, violence, deceit, or even suicide. Addiction brings people, and those they love, to ruin.

Everyone who has worked with addicts knows this and has experienced it. And we experience it whenever we have to deal with addiction within a given society—whether at work, in the community, in the city, or in the entire country.

Why don't you drink?

Because the addict has to be helped—whether it is an individual, a company, a community, a city, or a whole country. And I have to start with myself. That's why I don't drink.

Dr. Joachim Schwarz, M.D.





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In den Schmittten 13
57520 Dickendorf
Germany

E-Mail: info@srac.info
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