

## Can You Guess the Most Harmful Drug Worldwide?

- What is a mind-altering substance that affects judgment?
- What can create a serious dependency and cause harm to both individuals and others?

If you answered “alcohol,” you’d be right! Many people don’t think of alcohol as a drug, but it certainly meets the criteria of being one.

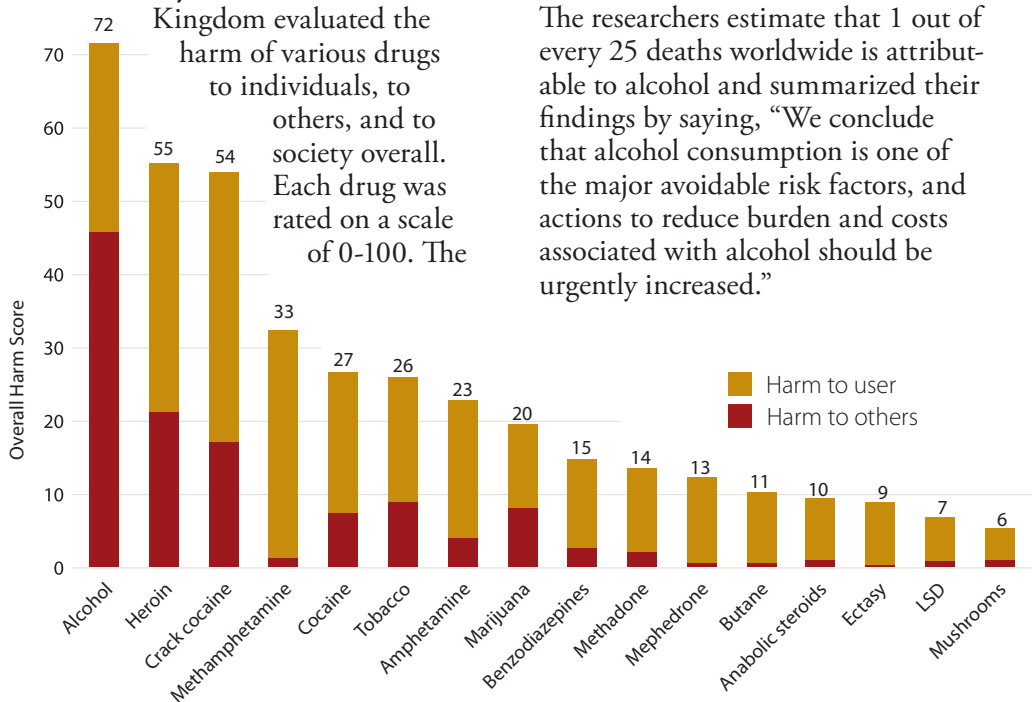
A new study from the United Kingdom evaluated the harm of various drugs to individuals, to others, and to society overall. Each drug was rated on a scale of 0-100. The

Are your drinking patterns safe? Take this quiz: <http://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov>

higher the number, the more harmful the drug. The drug rated the most harmful overall was alcohol.

The results for all drugs can be seen in the chart below. Notice that while all drugs cause harm, some are inherently more dangerous to the user, and some are more dangerous to others.

The researchers estimate that 1 out of every 25 deaths worldwide is attributable to alcohol and summarized their findings by saying, “We conclude that alcohol consumption is one of the major avoidable risk factors, and actions to reduce burden and costs associated with alcohol should be urgently increased.”



More than a third of American adults never drink alcohol. That’s the safest course to prevent alcohol problems. If you choose to drink alcohol, be sure to limit your intake to no more than 1 drink daily for women or 2 drinks daily for men to minimize the harm and risk of dependency. Also remember that some people should not drink any alcohol: women who are pregnant or trying to become pregnant, anyone driving a car or operating machinery, anyone at work, people taking medications that interact negatively with alcohol, and people who don’t want their judgment adversely affected.



Many light beers have less alcohol and fewer calories.

*The Lancet. Nov. 2010.*

If you have a family history of alcoholism, here's what you should know: <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/FamilyHistory/famhist.htm>

## Choose Healthy Foods This Year

All fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and beans are carbohydrates. When eaten in their natural state (unrefined) they are very good for you. They provide essential vitamins, nutrients, and fiber – all of which reduce the risk of chronic diseases. But the refining process removes the fiber.

Refined foods (e.g., sugar, white bread) are linked to increased risk of diabetes and obesity. These foods raise blood sugar levels quickly, and those levels drop just as quickly. How fast carbohydrates are absorbed into the blood stream is measured in terms of glycemic index.

Carbohydrates that are absorbed quickly and cause the blood sugar to rise rapidly are called “high-glycemic foods.” Examples include sugars and soft drinks, as you would expect,

but also some other foods you might not expect such as French fries, white rice, and other refined foods.

According to new research from a large study in Italy, refined carbohydrates might also be as bad for your heart as saturated fats and cholesterol. In the study, people who ate the most highly refined carbohydrates were 2.24 times more likely to develop heart disease, have a heart attack, or die from heart disease than were those who ate fewer of these foods.

For best health, eat unrefined carbohydrates and fiber-rich foods at most meals, such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole-grain bread and brown rice.

*PLoS Medicine. 2010.*



## Just One Smoke Can Hook You

Tobacco use is the second major cause of death worldwide and the single most preventable cause of disease, disability, and death in the United States. Each year, 443,000 Americans die prematurely from smoking or from exposure to secondhand smoke. Another 8.6 million people have a serious illness caused by smoking.

One of the best ways to reduce smoking-related deaths is to not smoke and to avoid secondhand smoke. If you don't smoke, don't start. If you have children, encourage them to never smoke – not even once.

When researchers followed more than 1,200 children from sixth grade through ninth grade, they found that some adolescents can get “hooked” on nicotine after their very first cigarette. Adolescents who smoked at least once a month were 10 times more likely to



feel addicted and have difficult withdrawal symptoms when they tried to stop.

“Every day, 3,900 children pick up their first cigarette and 1,000 children become addicted smokers,” says Eric Walker, spokesperson for the American Cancer Society. Those who make it to age 18 without inhaling cigarette smoke are least likely to become regular smokers.

If you do smoke, make the decision to quit. It can be a long and hard process. But millions of people have succeeded in quitting for good. You can be one of them!

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; American Cancer Society; Pediatrics. 2010.*

Are you ready to quit?  
Read 12 Steps to Quitting Smoking at:  
[www.wellsource.info/wn/12-Steps-to-Quit.pdf](http://www.wellsource.info/wn/12-Steps-to-Quit.pdf)

## Wear a Shoe that Fits

More than 43 million Americans – 1 in 6 people – have trouble with their feet, mostly from improperly fitting shoes.

Poorly fitted shoes can lead to heel pain, corns, Achilles tendonitis, bunions, hammertoe, ingrown toenails, and even pain in the knees, hips, and back. The highest priorities for shoes should be that they fit properly and are comfortable. Here are some guidelines to help you find the proper fit:

- **Buy a shoe that fits.** Shoe sizes vary by brand and among styles within brands.
- **Try on both shoes.** It's common for one foot to be larger than the other. Fit to your larger foot. Inserts can be added to the shoe of your smaller foot for a better fit.
- **When possible, buy shoes that fit your arch** – whether it's low (or flat), high, or medium.
- **Go shoe shopping in the evening.** Feet swell throughout the day.
- **Wear the kind of socks or stockings you plan to wear** with the shoes you're trying on.



- **Stand and walk around** when trying on new shoes. There should be about a half inch between your longest toe and the end of the shoe (1 inch for athletic shoes). The shoes should bend where your foot naturally bends. Also check for heel slipping.

- **Measure your foot** (length and width) at least once a year. Your feet change sizes as you age.

If the shoe feels tight or otherwise uncomfortable, put it back in the box and look for a wider shoe or different style. Never buy a shoe expecting to “break it in.”

A good pair of shoes is the most important piece of athletic equipment you can buy. If you enjoy a variety of sports, then a cross trainer shoe should work fine for you. But if you participate more intensively in a specific sport, then buy an athletic shoe specifically designed for that sport.

Well-fitted shoes don't need to be expensive. One study found that lower-end shoes cushioned runners' feet as well as – and possibly even better than – high-cost shoes.

*British Journal of Sports Medicine. 2007.*

*American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. 2010.*

### Especially for Ladies...

High-heeled shoes are a special foot hazard for women because they focus all your weight on the ball of your foot. It's better to buy and wear shoes with heels 1 inch or lower. If you must wear higher heels, keep them below 2¼ inches and take them off after 3 hours of wear. During those 3 hours, slip them off whenever possible – while you're riding in a car, sitting at your desk, and at the dinner table.

*American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. 2010.*



### ASK THE WELLNESS DOCTOR

**Q:** My husband is a long-time user of tobacco who has tried unsuccessfully to quit many times. How can I help him?

**A:** Go to [www.wellsource.info/wn/ask-tobacco.pdf](http://www.wellsource.info/wn/ask-tobacco.pdf) to read the answer from Don Hall, DrPH, CHES.

To ask your question, email: [paulaw@wellsource.com](mailto:paulaw@wellsource.com), subject line: Ask the Wellness Doctor. Emails with any other subject line will be directed to the spam folder.

**Health Challenge:** “Exercise 60-90 Minutes Daily” available at: [www.wellsource.info/wn/hc-Exercise60-90.pdf](http://www.wellsource.info/wn/hc-Exercise60-90.pdf). Studies have found that the best way to successfully lose weight and keep it off is to be active at least 60 minutes each day.