

Binge drinking – a British disease

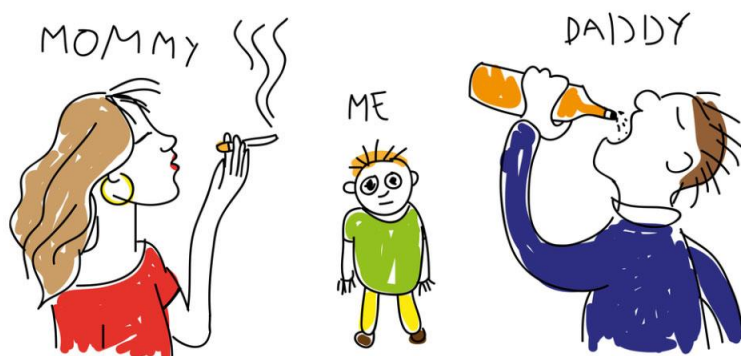
“Binge drinking is the new British disease”, says Prime Minister Tony Blair. Drinking as much alcohol in as little time as possible has become part of the weekend culture of teenagers and young adults in Britain. As a result the city centres in the UK become no-go-areas for many citizens every weekend. At eleven o’ clock, when the pubs are closing, you can see young people staggering¹ out onto the streets, starting fights, urinating and vomiting² in public. Binge drinking is common among young men as well as women in Britain, making the UK ‘European champion’ in this discipline.

“On a night out I drink ten to twelve bottles of beer”, says 18-year-old student Michelle in an interview with the British newspaper *Daily Mirror*. Twice to thrice a week she meets with friends to binge drink. Often she drinks so much, that she has blackouts: “If you can’t remember last night, it must have been a good one”, Michelle says.

Teenagers like Michelle are the reason for up to two-thirds of all ambulance calls on Friday and Saturday nights. Besides alcohol poisoning the ambulances have to pick up drunks who had accidents or became injured in violent fights. In addition to that, for women there is always the risk of getting sexually abused³ while knocked out by one drink too much.

Today binge drinking is seen as the ‘normal’ way to drink by most teenagers in the UK. Almost 60 per cent of those aged 15 to 16 admit that they had more than five drinks in one evening during the last month. About one third of this age group binge drink three times or more a month.

Meanwhile even educational sites on the Internet do not tell teenagers any longer they should not drink any alcohol at all. Instead they are giving useful advice for a night out from “Eat something before you start to drink!” to “Don’t sleep on your back if you think you might vomit.” Another useful tip: Drink some tonic water in between. You can always tell your binge drinking friends that it is a *gin* tonic.



¹ to stagger – torkeln

² to vomit – sich übergeben

³ to abuse – missbrauchen

I. Answer the following questions on your text-sheet. Take notes on a new sheet of paper. Don't write full sentences! You have to give back your text-sheet in 15 minutes!

1. Explain the term "binge drinking"?

2. What is the result of binge drinking in the UK?

3. What do binge drinkers risk? Which special risk is there for women?

4. What do teenagers think about binge drinking?

5. How many teenagers in Great Britain drink alcohol on a regular basis? How much and how often do they drink?

6. What kind of advice is given by educational sites on the Internet to teenagers who drink alcohol?

Binge Drinking

A Serious, Under-Recognized Problem
among Women and Girls



1 in 8

Nearly 14 million US women binge drink about 3 times a month.



1 in 5

1 in 5 high school girls binge drink.

6 

Women average 6 drinks per binge.

Source: CDC Vital Signs, January 2013

Somebody put something in my drink

"Rachel! Rachel, can you hear me!" – The words were coming from far away, slowly finding their way into Rachel's head. After a few seconds the 18-year-old girl managed to open her eyes and looked into the face of a doctor. She was sick and felt a sharp pain in her head. "Where am I?", she murmured. "You are in a hospital. Somebody spiked your drink in the club. You are lucky that your friends took care of you.", the doctor answered. "We told the police about it. You have to talk to them later", the man added as Rachel slowly went back to sleep.

Drink-spiking – putting drugs in somebody's drink – doesn't happen very often, police officials say, but it has increased in Great Britain over the last years. As in Rachel's case the victims⁴ are mostly young women. The spikers are usually men who want to have sex with their victims and think that drink-spiking will make them helpless. But police officials warn: If someone is too drunk or drugged to say 'yes' to sex, it can be considered rape⁵.

Still, drink-spikers often get away with their crime. It is said that only 15 percent of the victims report the crime to the police. Some feel too ashamed others cannot remember exactly what happened. The reason is that the drug that is most often used in drink-spiking, *Rohypnol*, leaves the memory blurred⁶. About 25 percent of the victims cannot remember anything at all.

Pub goers should take the risk seriously and follow safety advice on the matter, police officials say, for example: Avoid going out alone. Never accept a drink from a stranger. Never leave your drink alone. And: If you think that your drink was spiked then throw it away. Taking the risk could cost much more than buying a new drink.

Another thing that might help against spiking are the new *alcotops*, made from brightly coloured plastic, which can be put over the top of open bottles making it much harder to spike a drink without being noticed.



⁴ victim - Opfer

⁵ rape - Vergewaltigung

⁶ blurred – verschwommen

I. Answer the following questions on your text. Take notes on a new sheet of paper. Don't write full sentences! You have to give back your text-sheet in 15 minutes!

1. What is drink-spiking?

2. Who is in danger of drink-spiking?

3. Who spikes drinks in the UK and why? Is spiking a crime?

4. Why do spikers often get away with what they do?

5. What is *Rohypnol* and what is its effect on people?

6. Explain the British police safety advice against drink-spiking! What are alcotops?
