


"I try not to drink too much, because when I'm drunk, I bite." —Bette Midler

Glamour Health

The Drinking Story Every Woman Should Read

This research on alcohol could
change your habits.

By Catherine Ryan



Ah, yes, the
four-drinks-in
camera
pose. Look
familiar?

► When it comes to women and alcohol, experts are pretty blunt: We're drinking too much. One in five women ages 18 to 34 is a binge drinker, regularly downing four or more servings of beer, wine, or liquor in one sitting, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Bingeing used to be defined as five drinks for men *and* women, but the National Institutes of Health lowered our limit because we're biologically different from men, explains Dafna Kanny, Ph.D., senior scientist in the CDC's alcohol program—namely, we get drunker off the same amount of booze.

And many of us don't stop at four. The average young female binge drinker tosses back *six* drinks a pop more than three times a month. The fallout: DUIs for women have doubled in the past few decades, and, terrifyingly, women ages 21 to 34 are more likely to kill or be killed when driving drunk than any other group. How'd we get here? Experts point to these factors:

We keep up with the guys. "Women drink like frat boys because they're *around* frat boys, and they carry that into adulthood," says Gabrielle Glaser, author of

the alcohol exposé *Her Best-Kept Secret*. "They continue because they don't see any bad effects." But women who binge-drink once a week are 50 percent more likely than abstainers to develop abdominal obesity and its major risk factors for heart disease, research shows.

Everyone overpours. In bars and restaurants the average cocktail or glass of wine is about 42 percent larger than a recommended serving. Plus, women often choose no-cal mixers, which get you drunk faster, since there's no sugar to slow your body's absorption of alcohol.

We think it's heart-healthy. Yes, a glass of wine is good for your heart, but "too many women figure if one is good, three is better," Glaser says. "But no one is really drinking for health. In America people get drunk as a stress release." And alcohol *raises* your risks of many cancers, including breast cancer. Despite all this, even experts say there's no need to become a teetotaler. "Remember, alcohol is a drug," Kanny says. "And it can be a poison if not consumed in moderation. Keeping it to one drink a day is the best strategy." ■