Safe Summer Socializing: Drinking Responsibly over the Summer Months

Cottages, barbeques, pool parties and long weekends all seem to go hand-in-hand with cold beers, fine wine and frosty daiquiris. But those celebratory summer drinks, mixed with hot temperatures and seasonal activities, can be a dangerous combination. Fortunately, there are a few simple precautions you can take so you can enjoy those precious months of summer socializing safely and responsibly. Before enjoying a few beverages, make sure you:

Stay hydrated. Drinking in the sun speeds up the effects of alcohol, especially dehydration. This can lead to heat-related illnesses including heat stroke or exhaustion. Alcohol also impacts your judgement, which may prevent you from realizing it's time to get out of the sun or replace alcoholic beverages with water. To have fun in the sun, alternate alcoholic beverages with water—don't wait until you're thirsty—and take regular shade breaks. Keep track of how many drinks you've had and know your limits.

Eat up. Just as you need to stay hydrated, you should also eat before and during alcohol consumption. Food helps your body absorb alcohol and slows down the effects. Choose high-protein foods like cheese and meats and carbohydrates including crackers and bread. Nutrient-rich fruits and vegetables will also help your body better process alcohol.

Keep it small. There can be a lot of pressure at summer events to keep your glass full. Consider diluting your drinks by adding soda water or extra ice, request smaller portions or choose drinks with lower alcohol content. Or why not enjoy a party vibe without the alcohol and sip on a tasty "mocktail." Mix all the ingredients of your favourite drinks without the added alcohol.

Find a safe ride. If you're attending a social event, nominate a designated driver. You don't want to be negotiating during the party, realize that no one is fit for driving or ever get behind the wheel after drinking. It's also always a great option to take a taxi, public transportation or walk. Whatever plan you choose, just make the decision before you head out for the evening to ensure a safe return home at the end of the night.

Dress the part. If you're enjoying time outside it's important to protect yourself from the sun. Whether you're at the beach or on a patio choose lightweight, light-coloured clothing, wear a hat and sunglasses and use sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher. Remember: the dangerous effects of the sun are heightened when consuming alcohol.

Separate sports and alcohol. Alcohol affects your balance, coordination and judgement and these are enhanced through sun exposure and heat. Summer activities like volleyball and swimming can become downright dangerous if you've been drinking and may lead to some serious injuries.

Remain aware. Alcohol and warm temperatures can lead you into some risky situations. If you're camping with friends or at a cottage you could find yourself around a smouldering campfire or swimming in the middle of the night. Just remember that alcohol affects your ability to react and these types of activities are extra dangerous when drinking is involved. The best way to avoid these potentially perilous scenarios is to limit your alcohol intake to one or two drinks so your good judgement stays intact.

Many people admit they drink more alcohol during the summertime—warm weather and good times seem to go together. But, you can't throw caution to the wind. Alcohol combined with warm temperatures can be pretty dangerous. Keep it moderate, stay aware and be smart so that you can enjoy the summer months, the warm weather and socializing..