



Why do ladies extend their pinkies when holding drinks?

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You can spot a classy lady at a party by the way she holds her beverage container. Whether it's a fancy champagne flute or a can of beer, a woman of sophistication keeps her pinkie extended straight, with only the thumb and three fingers on the glass. Puzzled by this nuance for years, I've finally figured out why. The sophisticated woman is showing everyone she is counting her drinks! The three fingers on the glass show she's limiting herself to a three-drink maximum. That's because four drinks in 24 hours, for a woman, is a binge!

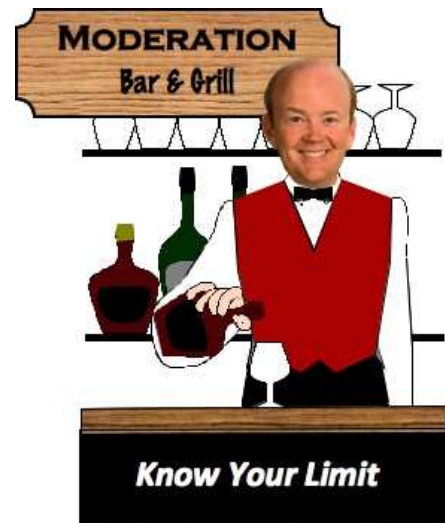
If you watch a gentleman drink, you'll find further proof of my theory. A man who holds his drinking glass with his thumb and all four fingers shows that he knows to limit himself to four servings, as five drinks in 24 hours, for a man, would be a binge!

I know that all of you blog readers are ladies and gentlemen, and understand the definition of a drinking binge: **Four or more drinks for a woman, five or more drinks for a man, in 24 hours equals a binge.** And you understand that a "binge" differs from a "bender." Whereas a three-day-long drunken "bender" is accomplished only by extreme misuse of alcohol, a simple binge can occur almost accidentally. Most people who drink alcohol do so socially and in moderation. Moderate drinking is defined as one to two drinks in 24 hours, and not more than 14 in a week. But, even normally moderate drinkers could surprise themselves by reaching binge level simply by having a cocktail before dinner, a couple of glasses of wine with the meal, then an after dinner drink. Because this can happen fairly easily, ladies and gentlemen should use the pinkie up/pinkie down drink counting method I have described!

But, portion size can undo this drink counting method, just as portion size can do in dieting. When counting drinks, remember that **each of these is a serving of alcohol:**

- 12 ounces of beer
- 5 ounces of wine
- 1 ½ ounces of spirits

Some people find the idea of consuming four or five drinks inconceivable! To other people, that seems like nothing at all. But, it doesn't matter how it *seems*. What matters is, what it *does*. Without a doubt, even a single binge does bad things for your health. Accidental injury risk increases, not only behind the wheel of a car, but also on a snowmobile, a motorcycle, in a boat, or on the basement stairs. Binges cause next-day blood pressure to be higher and heart rates faster. Work accident risks are greater even



24 hours after a binge. Work productivity drops for 24 hours after a binge, and the likelihood of work absence increases. That means lost production and missed opportunities for the work organization. And, that amount of alcohol equals a lot of calories, of a type which are hard for the body to metabolize. Those calories deposit directly into the liver, causing a condition with the unglamorous name of fatty liver. Repeated binges can make that progress all the way to cirrhosis.

Safe use of alcohol is a “numbers game” as in how many drinks, what size, and how often. Here’s a great web site with online calculators and interactive tools to help ensure you and loved ones have the information you need to use alcohol wisely if you choose to drink:

<http://www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/>

Occ Doc in a Box encourages you to enjoy all your celebrations safely and in moderation. And ladies, keep those pinkies pointed!