

Spring Break – Ladies, have fun but be safe **by Steve Danzig, LMSW-CC, LADC, CCS**

With this year's spring break just around the corner, it is important for young women to be aware of the dangers of excessive drinking. According to a recent study by the American Medical Association (AMA), heavy drinking during spring break puts women, in particular, at risk for sexually transmitted diseases, blackouts, and violence.

644 women ages 17 to 35 participated in the AMA study. Of those surveyed –

- 74% said that women on spring break use drinking as an excuse for “outrageous behavior”
- 57% said that being promiscuous is a “way to fit in”
- 83% said they had friends who drank the majority of nights they were on spring break
- 59% said they know friends who were sexually active with more than one partner
- Approximately 60% said they know friends who had unprotected sex during spring break
- 20% said they regretted the sexual activity they engaged in during spring break
- 12% said they felt forced or pressured into sex
- 84% said they thought images of college girls partying during spring break may contribute to an increase in females’ “reckless behavior”
- 86% said those images may contribute to dangerous behaviors by males toward women
- 92% said it was easy to get alcohol while on spring break; and
- 40% said access to free or cheap alcohol or a drinking age of under 21 were important factors in their decision to go on a spring break trip

The American Medical Association also found that during spring break each year, the cities and hospitals in Cancun, Mexico report an increase in deaths, rapes, injuries, assaults, and arrests related to drinking. Similarly, in Daytona, Florida, during the month of spring break, twice as many rape cases are reported to county officials.

Spring Break should be fun, but it should also be safe. Parents should talk to their kids about a few basic safety tips. And girlfriends traveling together should make a pact ahead of time to follow these safety rules.

- Be aware of how much you are drinking. In other words, know your limit. You do not want to get so drunk that you do not have control over your body.
- Have a buddy system. Travel in pairs or packs and never leave anyone in your group behind. Keep each other safe. If you do decide to go separate ways, communicate your plans and have a hook-up time. If your friend misses the hook-up time, call for help immediately. It is better to be safe than sorry. Another tip: if you have a cell phone with camera capabilities, take a snapshot of the person your pal is leaving with. It could be helpful to the police later on.
- Never drink from a cup that has been out of your sight. Date rape drugs can be easily hidden in an alcoholic beverage.
- If you plan to be sexually active, be safe. Carry condoms with you at all times.

Published in the Raymond Roadrunner newspaper – April 2006