

## **In The Mix With AOD**

### **“In The Mix” With AOD Episode Four: Halloween Safety**

Growing up, Halloween was all about who could get the most candy when out trick or treating, or who had the best witches or ghost costume in the neighborhood. Our parents used to watch over us as we begged for at least one scary movie on the night of Halloween. Boy have we come a long way from those years. We are not little witches and ghosts anymore as Halloween in college often turns into a week long holiday filled with endless parties, and horror themed everything. Despite parties being an anticipated aspect of college life, research shows that drinking and substance use is used at a much higher, more dangerous rate during the Halloween season. According to a 2019 study by the American Addiction Centers, men ages 20 to 24 consume an average of four drinks on Halloween night, while women in the same age range consume an average of 2.9 drinks. Over 15 percent of people in this group were reported to have blacked out while celebrating which occurs as a result of binge drinking. It's important to have a plan in place when celebrating Halloween to be looking out for one another in your group, and remaining aware of your surroundings. In this episode, we will be discussing a few safety tips surrounding substance use to keep in mind when celebrating Halloween, the signs to be on the lookout for with drink spiking, and how to still have a spooktacular night while in recovery.

Hey, I'm Bethann Long and welcome to another episode of “In The Mix” with AOD, a podcast provided by the Alcohol and Other Drug Services right here at Grand Valley. Happy spooky season everybody! We have officially entered the time of year where all we can think about is the thrills and chills from haunted houses to scary movies. Halloween is right around the corner, my absolute favorite holiday of all time. What are you guys thinking about dressing up as? I seriously have so many ideas of what to do and can't wait to show them off to my friends. Now whether you plan to have a cozy night in with friends watching some scary movies, or plan to get all dressed up for a night out, it's important to know how to stay safe on the scariest night of the year.

Our first tip is to make sure you are celebrating with known and trustworthy people. It's definitely not safe to go out alone, especially if you are not familiar with the place or people there. If you are choosing to go out with friends in a large group, which is strongly recommended, put in place a buddy system to ensure that no one is ever alone throughout the night, and everyone's safety is being taken into consideration. When planning your costumes, whether you are choosing to dress up solo or as a group, it's important to remember that this holiday is no excuse to appropriate any culture, nor is there ever an excuse for cultural appropriation. This occurs when someone uses elements of another culture, without acknowledging the cultural background and significance associated with them. Some things to ensure you are staying away from using makeup to alter your skin tone, and dressing up in a costume that is considered a stereotype of an entire culture. For example, any aspect of Native American cultural dress is not considered a costume as this is considered part of sacred religious attire for various indigenous communities. So wearing them as a costume instead of for their intended use is disrespectful towards those communities. Please be mindful of cultural importance this Halloween, and beyond. Next, plan ahead and be aware of your surroundings! If you are choosing to partake in substance use on Halloween night, make sure you are planning ahead with your group to ensure you have a way of getting around safely. Make sure someone in the group is choosing to be the designated driver, or make a plan to have someone you know and trust to pick you up. There are also public transportation options available such as the Laker Line, which has multiple stops throughout campus and off campus apartments, or rideshare

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services such as Uber or Lyft are also safe options to use. Please make sure you are not accepting any drinks or substances from people that you do not know. Only accept and consume drinks from friends that you trust or drinks that you have opened and served yourself. Also, be wary of drink spiking, and know the symptoms.

Now, let's go over what exactly drink spiking is, the symptoms, and what to do to help those affected. Drink spiking occurs when someone puts alcohol or other drugs into another person's drink without their knowledge. It's an important note to make that this can happen to absolutely anyone, even those who only drink on special occasions. To avoid drink spiking, never leave a drink unattended. Try keeping your hand over the opening of the drink to help prevent any substances from being dropped into your drink. Drink spiking can take multiple different forms which include: pouring alcohol into a non-alcoholic drink, pouring more alcohol than agreed upon into an alcoholic drink, or placing prescription or illegal drugs into an alcoholic or non-alcoholic drink. Some effects that prescription or illegal drugs can have on you in a spiked drink include muscle relaxation, slurred speech, headache, short-term memory loss, or even distortions in one's reality. Here are some of the warning signs of drink spiking to be on the lookout for when out with friends: they include feeling lightheaded or faint, sleepiness, nausea, headache, loss of reflexes, feeling "out of it" or unable to think straight, speech difficulties, loss of consciousness, and a severe or unusual hangover. Drinking a spiked drink can be a truly terrifying experience especially if you are not somewhere you are familiar with or surrounded by a group of trusted friends. If you see a friend who is experiencing symptoms of a spiked drink it is important to take action immediately. Alert a trusted person such as venue management or security, and call 911 and seek professional medical attention as soon as possible. Make sure to tell the police about the incident, and remember that Medical Amnesty laws protect students who seek professional assistance in case of emergencies involving alcohol or other drugs.

There are many ways to help protect yourself and others from drink spiking. When out, make a plan with friends to check in with one another throughout the night to make sure that everyone is okay. Be aware of your surroundings- especially when in a venue that is new to you. Make sure you know where exits are and where to find trusted workers if out at a bar or club. When talking with those you don't know well, do not share any personal information about yourself. Ordering your own drinks is the best tactic as you can ensure that you are the only one touching your drink, and you're able to watch the drink get made right in front of you. Always trust your instincts! If you think someone is tampering with drinks, alert a trusted person such as a party host or venue manager so that they are aware of the situation. This isn't something to handle alone! All of this information regarding drink spiking and how to be safe while out can be found on Grand Valley's Alcohol and Other Drugs Services website under the students tab.

If you are in recovery and are questioning whether to celebrate Halloween this year, or worried about being around substances, know that you can still have a spooky and fun Halloween. This holiday does not need to be celebrated only through drinking, there are so many other things you can do with friends that will certainly make the holiday memorable. Try hosting a horror movie marathon with friends where everyone brings their favorite horror movie, favorite candy and popcorn, and settle in for an evening of fright. You can make the night even more fun by setting the movies up on a projector. If you want to make some festive Halloween decorations, have a pumpkin carving contest with all of your friends! This is a fun activity that can be paired with snacks or even going out to dinner. Everyone is

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given the opportunity to tap into their creativity and have some festive Halloween fun. If you do end up going out to attend a Halloween party with friends, bring your own non-alcoholic beverage with you. People are less likely to offer you a drink if you already have one in your hand. Having a sober friend by your side as well as extra support throughout the night can make a massive difference.

As we get older, Halloween is continuing to look more and more different compared to sheet ghosts and pretty princess costumes, but our love for the day is still as strong as ever. Whether you and friends are choosing to have a spooky night out on the town, or night full of horror at home, it's important to make sure you're being safe. Happy Halloween everyone I hope you all have a safe, responsible, and fang-tastic holiday!