

## Alcohol-related Risks & Harms

The health risks that accumulate over a lifetime from alcohol increase progressively – this means that the more you drink, the greater the risk. Drinking alcohol can affect your liver or cause brain damage, heart disease, high blood pressure and increase your risk of many cancers. Other problems can be caused by the way alcohol makes you behave. These include injuries or death from accidents, falls or road trauma; violence; suicide attempts; unprotected and/or unwanted sex and sleep disorders.

The *Australian Alcohol Guidelines* recommend for healthy men and women, drinking no more than two standard drinks on any day to reduce your risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury over a lifetime. Drinking no more than four standard drinks on a single occasion to reduce the risk of alcohol-related injury arising from that occasion. Research shows that there is no safe level of alcohol consumption for women during pregnancy.

## Alcohol, Drugs & Medication

Consuming drugs, particularly in combination with alcohol, can greatly increase your impairment and affect your ability to drive. This includes over the counter and prescription medicines as well as illegal drugs such as cannabis and ecstasy. If you're taking any medication, seek advice from a health professional about whether you are safe to drive.

If you combine alcohol (a depressant drug) with stimulant drugs such as energy drinks that contain caffeine (a stimulant drug) you will be affected by the alcohol but may not feel the effects. If you are planning on using alcohol or other drugs, the best advice is don't drive.

## Alcohol and a good night

- Keep track of how much you drink
- Start with a non-alcoholic drink or have a non-alcoholic drink in between other drinks
- Eat some food before and during drinking
- Drink slowly
- Avoid drink top ups, rounds or shouts
- Choose low alcoholic beverages
- Look after your friends and watch your drinks at all times to ensure they are not tampered with.

**THINK ABOUT THE WAY THAT  
YOU DRINK**



Alcohol is the drug most often used to spike someone's drink, so if your drink has been spiked chances are you won't be able to tell. Buy your own drinks, never leave your drinks, or your friends' drinks unattended, and don't drink something you did not open or see opened and poured.



**DACU**  
DRUG & ALCOHOL  
COORDINATION UNIT

For further information on Drink Rite contact the  
Queensland Police Service, Drug and Alcohol  
Coordination Unit on [DACU@police.qld.gov.au](mailto:DACU@police.qld.gov.au)

## What is Drink Rite?

Drink Rite is a Queensland Police Service program that aims to promote a responsible attitude towards alcohol consumption and drink driving. Drink Rite events are usually held in licensed premises, but can be held to compliment other local events, and involve participation in a practical demonstration on standard drinks followed by an opportunity for a number of participants to consume alcohol and be breath tested by a police officer.

Drink Rite promotes the simple message:

### **If you plan to drink alcohol... Don't Drive!**

Drink Rite provide an opportunity to discuss the large range of factors that contribute to alcohol concentrations (including the differences between reading for men and women) to reinforce the message that attempting to estimate your breath alcohol concentration level is difficult and not recommended. Drink Rite also promotes the benefits of counting your drinks and drinking low versus high alcohol beverages.

At the conclusion of the Drink Rite event both participants and the audience should have an increased awareness of the link between the consumption of alcohol of different strengths and breath alcohol concentration, what constitutes a standard drink, how to use standard drinks to monitor your alcohol consumption, the range of factors that affect an individual's breath alcohol concentration and the link between alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harms, including violence and road crashes.

## What is a Standard Drink?

A standard drink is a measure of the amount of alcohol in a drink. In Australia one standard drink contains 10grams (12.5ml) of alcohol. The standard drink is a simple and reliable way of keeping track of how much pure alcohol is consumed by counting standard drinks, instead of counting bottles, cans or glasses etc, that may contain varying amounts of alcohol. Check the label on your drink to see how many standard drinks it contains.

## Alcohol & Driving

Alcohol is a contributing factor to approximately 34% of road crash fatalities on Queensland Roads each year. These crashes have tragic consequences for victims and families and could be avoided.

Even small amounts of alcohol affect your ability to drive and increase your risk of being in a road crash. A clear relationship exists between a person's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) and crash risk. At a reading of 0.01 you are almost five times as likely to be in a crash. A driver with a BAC of 0.15 has a crash risk 22 times that of a driver with no alcohol in their system.

## **The ONLY thing that will reduce your alcohol concentration is TIME!**



## Attempting to judge your alcohol concentration is a mistake!

There are many factors that affect the level of alcohol concentration in a person's body and influence the rate at which alcohol is metabolised by the body. For example:

- How much alcohol you drink
- The time period over which you consume
- How much you weigh
- How long since you have last eaten
- Whether you are fit and healthy
- Whether you are on other medication
- Your liver functions
- Whether you drink regularly
- Your mood
- Your gender
- The type of alcohol you consume.

Once you commence drinking alcohol it is difficult to say when your alcohol concentration will peak. For example, your peak alcohol concentration may be an hour or more after you stop drinking.

Coffee, exercise, cold showers, urinating or vomiting will not reduce your blood alcohol concentration or make you 'sober up' faster. 91% of all alcohol in your body is eliminated through metabolism by the liver. A healthy liver can take an hour or more to break down, or metabolise, one standard drink. This is why your alcohol concentration may be high for many hours – even into the following day.

Think ahead-plan an alternative to driving before you leave home, use taxis, public transport or a designated driver who does not consume alcohol.