

DRINKING **DRIVING** **MAKING THE** **RIGHT CHOICE**





TABLE OF CONTENTS

There's nothing wrong with having a drink	1
Alcohol and the law	1
- Rule number 1: Know yourself	2
- Rule number 2: Know your own limits	3
- Rule number 3: What does the law say?	3
- Test your knowledge of the law	4
How much do you know about alcohol?	5
- Alcohol and food	5
- Alcohol, the brain and the digestive system	5
- Alcohol and judgement	6
- Alcohol habituation	6
Should you drive?	7
Moderation is always in good taste	9

ISBN 978-2-923548-33-3
Legal deposit
2011

Illustrations : Philippe Béha
André Dubois

There's nothing wrong with having a drink



It's fun to sip a drink among friends. A reasonable amount of alcohol enjoyed in a relaxed atmosphere adds a pleasant little something to any happy gathering. It's also a time-honoured way to celebrate important events with those you love. The pop of a champagne cork puts everyone in the mood to toast the New Year or the newlyweds!

Alcohol is simply part of our human heritage. Since ancient times, it has been associated with life's significant events, such as birth, marriage, death and religious rites. Even today, many of us associate alcohol with major milestones and rituals. And everyone knows how easily the fun can be ruined by irresponsible behaviour.

Whenever you get together to celebrate with friends or family, remember that drinking too much--or irresponsibly--inevitably leads to inebriation and discomfort. Above all, remember that drinking and driving definitely do not mix.

1



Alcohol and the law (.08)

Drinking and driving is not only irresponsible, it's very dangerous for you and everyone else on the road.

The Criminal Code is extremely clear. It states that it is forbidden to operate a motor vehicle when:

- your ability to operate a motor vehicle is impaired;
- the alcohol concentration in your blood is greater than 80 mg of alcohol per 100 ml of blood, the famous "point zero eight" (.08).

For new drivers with a learner's or probationary licence and for drivers of 21 years of age or younger, no matter what type of licence they have:

- The law is even more severe
- You may not drive with any alcohol in your system at all. Zero tolerance is the rule.

But how can you tell if your faculties are impaired? How do you know if you're over the legal limit?

Rule number 1: Know yourself

First of all, remember that there is the same amount of alcohol in standard servings of any alcoholic beverage, no matter what kind.



Next, you have to learn how to calculate your blood alcohol content in milligrams (mg) and interpret it in terms of the "point zero eight" legal limit (80 mg).

The charts below give you an idea of what your blood alcohol content is likely to be, depending on your sex, your weight and how many drinks you have had.

2

MEN

Number of drinks	125 lb. 57 kg	150 lb. 68 kg	175 lb. 80 kg	200 lb. 91 kg	250 lb. 113 kg
1	34 mg	29 mg	25 mg	22 mg	17 mg
2	69 mg	58 mg	50 mg	43 mg	35 mg
3	103 mg	87 mg	75 mg	65 mg	52 mg
4	139 mg	116 mg	100 mg	87 mg	70 mg
5	173 mg	145 mg	125 mg	108 mg	87 mg

WOMEN

Number of drinks	100 lb. 45 kg	125 lb. 57 kg	150 lb. 68 kg	175 lb. 80 kg	200 lb. 91 kg
1	50 mg	40 mg	34 mg	29 mg	26 mg
2	101 mg	80 mg	68 mg	58 mg	50 mg
3	152 mg	120 mg	101 mg	87 mg	76 mg
4	203 mg	162 mg	135 mg	117 mg	101 mg
5	253 mg	202 mg	169 mg	146 mg	126 mg

It's important to subtract 15 mg of alcohol an hour, starting from the first drink, since that is the rate at which your body eliminates the alcohol. And forget the widespread myth that says you can handle one drink an hour. It's not true. Or rather, it's true only if you're a man who weighs 115 kg or more.

Also, if your liver is not functioning properly, it works less efficiently and more slowly, which slows the elimination process. Anyone with health problems should abstain from drinking or drink very moderately.

WARNING! The charts contain approximations only and should be interpreted with care. Other factors, such as fatigue, stress and medications, can affect your capacity to absorb alcohol. Your emotional and physical state can also determine your response to alcohol. In other words, you may be in no condition to drive, no matter what the charts say.

So think twice before having one too many and getting behind the wheel.

Rule number 2: Know your own limits

When it comes to alcohol, we are not all created equal. Never mind what your friends, partners or co-workers are drinking. They have their limits and you have yours.

Aside from the speed at which you're drinking, your sex, weight and muscle mass will determine how much alcohol you can consume before being affected. Furthermore, everyone reacts differently to alcohol, depending on their individual personality traits and particular psychological state at the time of drinking.

Generally speaking, women are more sensitive to alcohol because of their size, weight and percentage body fat. Women have a higher percentage of body fat than men, which means they have a lower percentage of water, and since alcohol dissolves mostly in water, women will achieve a higher blood alcohol concentration sooner than men.

Research has also shown that women's stomachs contain less of the enzyme responsible for breaking down alcohol. Consequently, a greater amount of alcohol reaches their bloodstream.

One standard drink for a woman is equal to about one and a half drinks for a man. In other words, it takes less alcohol for a woman to be impaired than a man.

Whatever the case, never let others decide for you and, most importantly, don't compare yourself to anyone else. Life is just too short to play Russian roulette with alcohol.

Assess the situation based on how YOU feel. You know your body and your feelings don't lie!



3

Rule number 3: What does the law say?

The law is very clear: the legal drinking limit, i.e. your blood alcohol limit, varies according to the type of licence you have.

Type of licence	Legal limit for driving
Learner	Zero (0)
Probationary	Zero (0)
Driver – 21 years of age or younger	Zero (0)
Driver	"Point zero eight" (.08)

Test your knowledge of the law

TRUE OR FALSE?



TRUE?
FALSE?

If you are pulled over for impaired driving, your licence will be suspended immediately if it is a repeat offense.

FALSE

If you are found to be driving while impaired, your licence will be suspended immediately for 90 days, regardless of whether it's a repeat offense or not.

TRUE?
FALSE?

If you are convicted of driving while impaired on a first offence, you will have to pay a significant fine but you get to keep your driver's licence.

FALSE

If you are convicted on a first offence, you have to pay a significant fine and your driver's licence is automatically cancelled for one year.

- In addition, first offenders must submit to a mandatory summary assessment of their behaviour, administered in a special centre, to determine whether their drinking habits are compromising their ability to drive safely. If the assessment is unfavourable, they must undergo a comprehensive assessment.

TRUE?
FALSE?

If you are driving with a learner's licence or probationary licence, or you are 21 or younger with any type of licence, and are found to have even the slightest amount of alcohol in your blood, your licence will be suspended for 90 days.

TRUE

If you are driving with a learner's licence or probationary licence and are found to have even the slightest amount of alcohol in your blood your licence will be automatically suspended:

- And four (4) demerit points will be entered on your driving record.
- You will have to pay between \$438 and \$865, including the fine plus other fees and contributions.
- If convicted of driving while impaired, you will be treated like all other drivers and your driver's licence will be cancelled automatically for one year.

TRUE?
FALSE?

The legal limit applies to all drivers, but there are a few exceptions.

FALSE

The legal limit applies to all drivers, no matter why they were drinking. Police officers will not give you a break even if you think you had a good reason to celebrate, e.g. a birthday, a promotion, a new job or a wedding.

Whatever the circumstances, if you have a learner's or probationary licence, or if you are 21 years of age or younger, no matter what type of licence you have, you mustn't drink at all if you plan to drive. If you have a regular driver's licence and are over 21 years of age, it's better not to drink if you plan to drive, or if you do, to drink moderately.

How much do you know about alcohol?

Alcohol and food

Alcohol is not digested like other foods. It passes quickly into the bloodstream without being transformed. More than 80% of the alcohol you drink is absorbed by the small intestine, and 20% goes directly from the stomach to the bloodstream.

Drinking on an empty stomach speeds up the process. When your stomach is empty, alcohol is absorbed by the small intestine in less than 30 minutes. Drinking without eating therefore makes you drunker more quickly.

Also, downing your drink in one gulp produces stronger effects than sipping it slowly.

Conversely, drinking during or after a meal slows the release of alcohol into the small intestine and thus reduces its circulation in the blood. When your stomach is full, it can take one to three hours for all the alcohol to reach the bloodstream.

Beware of delayed reactions. Pizza—or any other food—will not keep you sober. You'll take in extra calories and still be drunk.

**DON'T
BELIEVE THE
MYTH!**

Eating as you drink may slow the release of alcohol into the blood, but your blood alcohol level will still rise as you continue drinking, no matter what you eat.



Alcohol, the brain and the digestive system

Once it's in your bloodstream, alcohol travels to all parts of the body, including the brain. It acts on the entire nervous system and affects critical control centres, in particular, your muscle coordination and decision-making ability.

The liver is primarily responsible for getting rid of the alcohol you drink, eliminating more than 90% of it. The kidneys, lungs and perspiration take care of the rest.

No matter how much you drink, your liver keeps working at its regular pace. It is basically programmed to metabolize alcohol at the rate of 15 mg an hour, and it can't perform miracles!

If you drink too quickly, your liver becomes overloaded and can't handle the demand. Your head will soon start spinning and you'll begin to feel nauseous.

You won't start to feel better until the alcohol has been eliminated from your body.

**DON'T
BELIEVE THE
MYTH!**

When you drink too quickly, you put your liver under great pressure to keep up. Each additional drink has to wait its turn to be eliminated, and before long, the alcohol overload in your system produces discomfort and inebriation.

You must never drive when you feel like that. There is no shame in asking someone to take you home. In fact, it's a sign of maturity and intelligence.

Alcohol and judgement

Alcohol may have a mildly euphoric effect, but it is not a stimulant. It is actually a depressant that slows brain activity and reduces tension. Under the influence of alcohol, you lose your inhibitions; initially, it can put you in a pleasant mood and make you more sociable. Alcohol also changes how we see ourselves and others. It makes people bolder, but can affect their good judgement.

If you drink a lot, your reflexes slow down and it becomes dangerous to drive. Without realizing it, you can lose control and find it difficult to think clearly. It can be hard to concentrate or take the appropriate action at the right time.

Drinking too much also affects your coordination. When you are intoxicated, you may even have trouble seeing clearly, and you may feel confused and disoriented.



DON'T BELIEVE THE MYTH!

If your faculties are impaired, exercise and cold showers won't help. No amount of physical activity or fresh air can reduce the amount of alcohol in your blood. You can run or dance all you like: it won't do any good.

That's because barely 3% of the alcohol is eliminated through perspiration. The liver does most of the work, and you have to give it time.

6

Some people think that coffee--especially strong, black coffee--will get you sober. That's just another myth. Coffee can't do anything to speed the elimination of alcohol from your body. It may keep you from falling asleep, but it won't keep you from doing something stupid.

Alcohol habituation

If you are used to drinking, you may not feel the effects of alcohol as strongly. But don't rely on that as an indication of your condition.

No matter how you feel, the amount of alcohol in your blood is still the same.



DON'T BELIEVE THE MYTH!

Beer drinkers run the same risk as other drinkers. Remember that one can of beer contains the same amount of alcohol as a glass of wine or a shot of spirits. If you spend the evening drinking beer, ale or lager, you can end up just as drunk as someone who's been drinking vodka or gin shooters.

Whatever you drink, your body can eliminate only 15 mg of alcohol an hour.

Some people mistakenly believe that it's OK to drive if they have stopped drinking for an hour. But if you've been drinking all evening, it could take a lot longer than an hour to bring your blood alcohol content down to the legal limit. Patience is the only thing that works.

Should you drive?



Question:	How can you tell if someone has drunk too much to drive?
Answer:	<p>It's pretty easy to tell when people have had too much to drink. Some signs are physical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their eyes look irritated and bloodshot • Their breathing is rapid • They may be perspiring heavily <p>Other changes are behavioural. People who have drunk too much:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak louder and more quickly • Don't enunciate clearly • Have trouble standing up and walking a straight line • Stagger or stumble easily • Move more slowly • Seem distracted • Respond more slowly to questions • May be drowsy or fall asleep <p>Alcohol can also make people sadder, more aggressive or noisier. And it can cause them to break into uncontrollable laughter that has nothing to do with having fun!</p>
What should you do?	<p>If someone has drunk too much, you should offer help, as necessary by doing any or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent the person from driving • Offer a lift home • Offer any other safe solution

Question:	How does someone who has drunk too much behave behind the wheel?
Answer:	<p>Someone whose blood alcohol content is above the legal limit will have increasing difficulty with perception, motor coordination and concentration, which impairs the ability to drive safely.</p> <p>When people are intoxicated their peripheral vision is reduced, they don't hear as well and their ability to estimate distances is diminished. Their reflexes slow down and they may have trouble reacting appropriately to an obstacle in the road.</p> <p>After a few drinks, people's faculties are impaired and their personality changes. Without realizing it, they are likely to underestimate risk.</p> <p>And yet, everyone knows that driving requires your full attention. You must be in full possession of your faculties before you get behind the wheel or you will pose a danger to yourself and others on the road. It takes good judgement, quick reflexes, the ability to anticipate events and excellent coordination to drive safely and responsibly.</p>
What should you do?	<p>If you have had one or a few too many, hand your keys—and your life—to someone who is in full control and able to drive safely.</p>

Should you drive? (continued)

Question:	How does a responsible driver behave?
Answer:	<p>A responsible driver knows that someone who has drunk too much should never drive, even if that person feels in full control.</p> <p>The responsible driver knows that someone who has had one too many can't make an objective self-assessment. In fact, all drivers who drink may be a danger to themselves and others, even if sometimes their blood alcohol content is below the legal limit.</p>
What should you do?	<p>Friends, relatives, co-workers or whoever else is around should caution a drunk person who is about to drive and offer safe alternatives. Each of us bears a social and moral responsibility when it comes to driving while impaired.</p> <p>Drunk driving is everyone's business!</p>

8

Question:	What's the responsible way to party?
Answer:	<p>There are a number of options. When you go out with friends, or even as a couple, you can name a designated driver who agrees not to drink alcohol. Over time, you take turns so that everyone gets a chance to party as they like.</p> <p>Another solution is to share a taxi or take public transit, which doesn't cost much and minimizes risk.</p> <p>During the holiday season in December, you can contact Opération Nez rouge, an organization that provides volunteer drivers to take you home, no questions asked.</p> <p>People who host parties can help, too, by providing non-alcoholic drinks, such as juice, sparkling water or fruit punch as options for everyone. Hosts should stop serving alcohol at least one hour before guests are expected to leave, and they should encourage people to stop drinking alcohol in anticipation of the return home.</p>
What should you do?	<p>If any of your guests appears drunk, everyone should be concerned. Don't hesitate to intervene to prevent someone from driving. Offer a bed for the night or help the person find a place nearby to stay. If the person insists on going home, have someone else do the driving.</p> <p>Alcohol can often surprise you with its impact. You don't want to experience that behind the wheel!</p>

Moderation is always in good taste

Whatever the circumstances, you'll enjoy yourself a lot more if you drink moderately than if you get drunk. Balance is the key. Responsible people drink slowly and not too much, paying attention to their faculties and state of mind.

If you plan to drive, the choice is clear: drink very carefully or, better yet, don't drink at all. And if you are not in full control, hand the car keys to someone who is.

If you drive, you have to be aware of your responsibility. There is a place for alcohol in our lives... but not in our cars.

**FREE
IPHONE
ANDROID
APPLICATIONS**

To get an idea of how your blood alcohol content changes and affects your ability to drive as you drink over the course of an evening, check out the blood alcohol calculator at www.educalcool.qc.ca/en.

If you have an iPhone or a Android Phone, you can download the Blood Alcohol Calculator Éduc'alcool from the Apple Store or the Android Market and monitor your condition throughout the evening.





Moderation is always in good taste.

If you have a comment about this publication or want to order more copies, contact Éduc'Alcool.

Téléphone: 1-888-ALCOOL1 (1-888-252-6651) Courriel : info@educalcool.qc.ca

www.educalcool.qc.ca

VERSION FRANÇAISE DISPONIBLE SUR DEMANDE.