

Alcohol & Driving

Information and advice for patients

Alcohol Care Team

Alcohol & Driving

An estimated 6,480 people were killed or injured when the driver was over the limit in 2020. Many people are unaware of what is safe to drink before driving.

How alcohol affects driving

Alcohol can affect driving by causing:

- Reduced reaction time
- Impaired vision
- Over confidence resulting in risk taking
- Difficulty in hand eye co-ordination
- Reduced concentration
- Drowsiness

Tips for driving Safely

The best and safest advice is to avoid alcohol completely before you drive. Even if you had alcohol the day before you have been to sleep, there could still be high levels of alcohol in your system.

Whether it's OK to drive the next morning depends on a lot of factors, including how much you consumed and how much time your body has had to metabolise the alcohol.

On average your liver removes 1 unit of alcohol from your body in an hour, but many factors can affect this. This process occurs after one hour, so for example:

3 double gin and tonics = 6 units so this will take AT LEAST 7 hours before there is no alcohol in your body, but it could well take longer.

You cannot speed up this process

There's nothing you can do to speed up the rate alcohol leaves your system. Having a cup of coffee or a cold shower won't do anything to get rid of the alcohol. You might feel better, but you will still have the same amount of alcohol in your system.

Don't take risks!

There are strict limits on the amount of alcohol allowed in your system to be able to drive. In England it is 35 micrograms per 100 millilitres of breath. There is no foolproof way to drink and stay within the limit.

The advice from the police is clear: avoid alcohol altogether if you plan to drive.

Don't take any risks. If you're not sure, don't drive.

Alcohol & Driving

Information and advice for patients

Alcohol Care Team

Drink driving offences and penalties

Drink driving punishments depend on the seriousness of the offence:

- From 3 months to 14 years in prison
- A fine on a sliding scale which can be unlimited.
- A driving ban.
- An extended driving test before having your license returned.

High risk offenders

'High risk offenders' need to pass a medical examination to get their licence back after a drink driving ban. You are considered a high-risk offender if you:

- Have been convicted of two drink-driving offences within 10 years.
- Refused to give the police a sample of breath, blood, or urine to test for alcohol.

Being convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol can have a significant impact on every day life, beyond fines or a driving ban.

You may find it hard to enter other countries like the USA, and this can affect plans for taking holidays, working, or studying abroad.

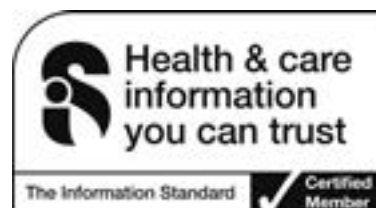
The DVLA

The Alcohol Care Team has a duty of care to inform the DVLA of any patient we think may drive whilst under the influence of alcohol, experiences an alcohol withdrawal seizure or those who have a physical dependency on alcohol and continue to drink.

For more info visit the DVLA website:

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact SWB Library Services on ext 3587 or email swbh.library@nhs.net.



A Teaching Trust of The University of Birmingham
Incorporating City, Sandwell and Rowley Regis Hospitals
© Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust

ML7313

Issue Date: December 2023

Review Date: December 2026