

Alcohol Content

Ole was having a heck of time. With a captive audience at the restaurant, the World War II fighter pilot was in rare form. The stories became bigger than life, and Ole kept ordering his favorite gin and tonics. After dinner, everyone at the table knew Ole shouldn't drive—everyone except Ole. But he was the war hero, the group's elder statesman, and it was his car. As they approached the dangerous curve in the country road, his five passengers knew he was going too fast and they sat glued to their seats, terrified. The Oldsmobile careened off the road, crashed through a barbed-wire fence, and mired in deep mud. There were two broken legs, a concussion, and nine cracked ribs. Miraculously, the six lived to tell how they almost went down in flames at the hands of the inebriated flying ace...and how careless they'd been to let him drive.



Holiday or No Holiday

It's possible to stay sober and have a good time. It's also possible to have a few drinks and stay safe. Here are some suggestions for taming the party spirits.

- Eat at least fifteen minutes before the first drink, and continue to consume food while you're drinking.
- Make your first drink a large glass of water, juice, or soda to quench your thirst.
- Always drink slowly. Never drink alcohol because you're thirsty. You'll drink too much, too fast.
- Alternate between alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages.
- Limit your consumption to one ounce of alcohol per hour. That equates to about one twelve-ounce beer, one four-ounce glass of wine, or one mixed drink.
- Stop drinking alcohol ninety minutes before the party is over. There is no other way to sober up.

Black coffee won't do it; neither will the mythical "cold shower" treatment, or other so-called quick-fix remedies. Only time will make you sober enough to walk, drive, or ride a bike safely.

- ◆ Don't drink punch or eggnog without first asking if they contain liquor.
- ◆ Avoid alcohol even in moderation when your energy level is low.
- ◆ If friends tell you that you shouldn't drive, listen to them.

If You Are the Host

- ◆ Serve alcohol-free drinks such as soft drinks and coffee.
- ◆ Serve foods, especially those rich in proteins. Eating slows the rate at which the body absorbs alcohol. You don't want your guests drinking on an empty stomach.
- ◆ Don't serve salty foods, which make people thirsty.
- ◆ Measure mixed drinks with a shot glass to avoid over-pouring.
- ◆ Do not allow guests to pour their own drinks. It sounds generous, but it's defeating. It's best to choose a reliable bartender who'll keep track of the size and number of drinks people consume.
- ◆ Carbonated water and mixers speed up alcohol's effects. It's best to add iced or non-carbonated water to dilute an alcoholic drink.
- ◆ Do not push drinks on guests.
- ◆ Stop pouring alcohol for someone who is obviously intoxicated.
- ◆ If the event is lunch or dinner, make the cocktail portion of the event short.
- ◆ Establish designated drivers in advance of the party, and offer a variety of non-alcoholic beverages. Designated drivers should drink no alcoholic

beverages; even one or two drinks can impair a person's ability to drive safely.

- ◆ Stop serving alcoholic beverages at least ninety minutes before the party breaks up. Serve a dessert treat.
- ◆ Never serve alcohol to someone under the legal drinking age, and never ask children to serve alcohol at parties.
- ◆ If someone does drink too much, drive him home, arrange a ride with another guest who is sober, call a taxi, or invite him to stay over.

Some Personal Concerns

- ◆ A person's metabolism and physical makeup change with aging, so a single drink packs a much stronger wallop in a sixty-year-old than in a twenty-year-old — something senior citizen Ole forgot.
- ◆ Usually, the less you weigh, the faster your Blood Alcohol Concentration level will increase with the same amount of alcohol.
- ◆ If you wake up with a hangover, wait at least three hours after you wake to get behind the wheel of a vehicle. If you can't wait, catch a ride with a co-worker.
- ◆ Alcohol consumption during pregnancy is one of the major preventable causes of birth defects and childhood disabilities. The advice here is simple and humane: Do not drink when you're pregnant or planning a pregnancy.
- ◆ With some medications, including many over-the-counter drugs, adverse reactions can occur when alcohol is consumed. Talk to your doctor, and read labels carefully.