

The Facts about Drunk Driving

Alcohol is a dangerous and powerful drug that affects millions of lives every day. Even if you are not drinking, alcohol may affect you. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:

- Alcohol is involved in 60% of all auto fatalities, most of which (75%) occur between 0000-0300 hrs.
- An alcohol-impaired fatality or injury occurs every 45-50 minutes and 90 seconds respectively.
- The average drunk driver operates a vehicle under the influence 80 times before his or her first arrest.
- One of three people will be involved in an alcohol-related crash in their lifetime.
- The 21-24 age group is most often involved in fatal crashes; males are twice as likely to be involved than females.
- 72% of sexual assaults, 83% of all murders, and 60% of reported child abuse cases were committed by individuals under the influence of alcohol.
- Underage drinking accounts for 11% of all US alcohol consumption and 90% of underage consumption is binge drinking. One of every 6 teens binge drinks, and over 7 million teens are problem drinkers. 20% of college students have alcoholic use disorder.
- Alcohol affects brain development since the brain does not fully mature until an individual is about 25 years old.
- More teens are killed under the influence of alcohol than all other drugs combined.
- 15+ million adults are alcoholics. The strongest risk factor in developing alcohol use disorder is family history.
- According to the CDC, alcohol costs over \$250 *billion* annually in lost productivity and health care. Property loss, pain and suffering and other costs are not included in this number.

An understanding of the following myths can help ensure adult enjoyment of alcohol is safe and trouble-free.

- *Alcohol makes me more outgoing.* No, alcohol is a depressant. It affects the central nervous system, impairing vision, coordination, judgment and reaction time. It lessens your judgment and inhibitions.
- *You can sober up with black coffee, a cold shower, fresh air or exercise.* Only time can sober up a drinker. While factors such as the drinker's height/weight and how much food is in his/ stomach affect how quickly one becomes impaired, the body needs an hour to process each ounce of liquor. So, if you have 5 drinks in two hours, your body will only burn off two of these drinks. You'll need another 3 hours of non-drinking time to become sober.
- *Beer or wine is not as intoxicating as hard liquor.* In fact, a 12-oz. beer, a 5-ounce glass of wine, and a 1-oz. shot of hard liquor all contain about the same amount of alcohol.
- *A DUI conviction is the same as any other traffic violation, except it carries more points.* A DUI conviction is not the same as a traffic violation, even a serious one like reckless driving. A DUI conviction will result in a criminal record that can affect your lifetime employment options and salary.

If you become intoxicated, *do not drive impaired.* A DUI conviction can carry up to a \$2,500 fine and a year in jail. When one includes fines, higher insurance rates, lawyer fees, and remedial programs, total costs of a conviction can reach \$10,000! If a friend is not available to give you a ride, call a taxi. During the December-January holiday season, St. Patrick's Day, Independence Day and Halloween, the Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP) SoberRide program will provide a free cab ride home, up to a \$30 fare. Since 1993, WRAP has provided more than 60,000 free rides during high-risk holidays to local residents. Call 1-800-200-TAXI.

NOVA Police offer training on alcohol abuse. If you want to learn about field sobriety tests and don some "drunk goggles" to see if you can pass the tests, contact NOVA PD Outreach at novapdoutreach@nvcc.edu. We will gladly do a presentation for your division, club or class.