

# ALCOHOL: CONSIDERING DIFFERENT IMPACTS FOR DIFFERENT PEOPLE

## *Teaching Social Responsibility; My Sister, My Responsibility®*

Developed by Jason Kilmer, Ph.D., University of Washington

Based on “Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College Students” by Dimeff et al. (1999)

**TIME** | 30 minutes

### **Objectives:**

- Understand how a person’s sex and weight are related to blood alcohol level.
- Understand factors associated with absorption of alcohol and the rate of burning off (or oxidizing) alcohol.
- Understand what counts as a drink.
- Identify strategies to reduce risks when one makes the choice to drink.

### **Group size:**

- Any group of 12 or more people is suitable for this workshop.

### **Setup:**

- Choose a space where the group can sit and face the facilitator comfortably.
- You will play a PowerPoint presentation during the lesson, so you’ll need to connect a laptop to a projector and screen.

### **Preparation:**

- Look up the university policies and local laws related to alcohol. Be sure to review the blood alcohol charts (see handouts) and related information in advance to gain a clear understanding of relevant points. Write the list of drinks on the flip chart paper prior to beginning the workshop.

### **Materials needed:**

- Projector and screen
- PowerPoint
- Flip chart and markers
- For each participant: “BAC Levels and Effects” and “Approximate BAC Levels as Function of Number of Drinks and Time, Determined by Weight of Females” handouts

## INTRODUCTION | 5 minutes

*The facilitator should introduce himself/herself, welcome participants and thank everyone for attending the session. Remind participants that drinking by students under the age of 21 is illegal, and that the only way to avoid all unwanted consequences associated with drinking is to abstain.*

### Share:

The goal for this workshop is to help you become aware of and think critically about factors at play in situations where alcohol might be present. This includes being aware of ways to reduce risks associated with drinking for those who make the choice to drink and providing information to reinforce the decision of those who choose not to drink.

## WHAT IS A “DRINK?” | 5 minutes

*Distribute “BAC Levels and Effects” handout.*

### Share:

Let’s think about a scenario you could encounter in a social setting here at college.

One of your sisters is at a party and decides that she is only going to have two drinks tonight. It’s been a few hours since she had anything to eat. Upon walking into the party, someone hands her a red cup with a mixed drink. She downs the drink pretty quickly, and she gets her second drink of the night. Though she intends to drink this one more slowly, she starts to feel pretty intoxicated, finishes this drink, and moves on for a third.

Let’s think about what’s happening here.

*Pose the three questions below; do not give time for the group to answer them yet. You will go through each question in depth throughout the workshop.*

### Share:

- How many drinks has she had?
- What factors contributed to getting intoxicated quickly?
- Why might she have had difficulty sticking to her goal?

Let’s go through these drink conversions.

A standard drink is anything that contains a half-ounce (or three teaspoons) of ethyl alcohol—drinks are not defined by the number of containers they come in. While there are always some differences across brands and within types of drinks, the following count as “a drink”:

- 12 ounces of beer
- 10 ounces of a microbrew, a specialist beer produced in a microbrewery
- 10 ounces of a wine cooler

### Alcohol: Considering Different Impacts for Different People

#### Alcohol: Considering Different Impacts for Different People

The goal of this workshop is to help you:

- Become aware of and think critically about factors at play in situations where alcohol might be present
- Be aware of ways to reduce risks associated with drinking for those who make the choice to drink
- Provide information to reinforce the decision of those who choose not to drink

#### What is a “drink?”

Scenario:

One of your sisters is at a party and decides that she is only going to have two drinks tonight. It’s been a few hours since she had anything to eat. Upon walking into the party, someone hands her a red cup with a mixed drink. She downs the drink pretty quickly, and she gets her second drink of the night. Though she intends to drink this one more slowly, she starts to feel pretty intoxicated, finishes this drink, and moves on for a third.

#### What is a “drink?”

Things to consider:

- How many drinks has she had?
- What has contributed to getting intoxicated quickly?
- Why might she have had difficulty sticking to her goal?

#### How many drinks has she had?

A standard drink:

- 12 ounces of beer
- 10 ounces of microbrew
- 10 ounces of a wine cooler
- 8 ounces of malt liquor
- 4 ounces of wine
- 2.5 ounces of fortified wine
- 1.25 ounces of 80-proof hard alcohol
- 1 ounce of 100-proof hard alcohol
- 12 ounces hard seltzer



- Eight ounces of malt liquor, a drink that is brewed from malt, especially one having a higher alcohol content than most beer or ale
- Eight ounces of ice beer, beer brewed by a process that freezes the beer and removes some of the ice, thus increasing the beer's alcohol content, e.g. Miller Lite Ice or Bud Ice
- 12 ounces of hard seltzer (5% alcohol by volume)
- Four ounces of wine
- 2.5 ounces of fortified wine, a drink that is made from wine to which a strong alcohol such as grape brandy has been added, e.g. sherry or port
- 1.25 ounces of 80-proof hard alcohol (40% alcohol by volume)
- One ounce of 100-proof hard alcohol (50% alcohol by volume)

*Work with the group to compute some standard drink examples for a range of “two” drinks. You will pose the example and ask participants to think about how many drinks it consists of. Call on participants for answers. Be sure to provide them with the correct answer after several guesses.*

#### Discuss:

- Let's think about what would make up two “drinks” by this definition.
- How about two pints of a microbrew? How many drinks is that?
  - » Two pints of microbrew beer is actually about three standard drinks. There are 32 ounces in two pints, and every 10 ounces counts as a drink.
- How about two 40-ounce bottles of malt liquor? How many drinks is that?
  - » Two 40-ounce bottles actually equal 10 standard drinks. This is 80 total ounces, and every eight ounces counts as a drink.
- How about two mixed drinks with three 1.25-ounce shots of hard alcohol in each?
  - » Remember that each 1.25-ounce shot classifies as a drink, so these two mixed drinks are actually six standard drinks.

#### Discuss:

- What can you conclude about this?
- What boundaries could a sister put in place if she makes the choice to drink?
- *Positive answers could include:*
  - » *Set a limit that is defined by standard drinks.*
  - » *Don't accept a drink if she doesn't know what's in it.*
  - » *Don't leave a drink unattended.*
  - » *Drink for quality instead of quantity.*

**What is a “drink?”**

- How about two pints of a microbrew? How many drinks is that?
  - Answer: Two pints of microbrew beer is actually about three standard drinks. There are 32 oz in two pints and every 10 ounces counts as a drink.

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**What is a “drink?”**

- How about two 40-ounce bottles of malt liquor? How many drinks is that?
  - Answer: Two 40-ounce bottles actually equal 10 standard drinks. This is 80 total ounces, and every eight ounces counts as a drink.

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**What is a “drink?”**

- How about two mixed drinks with three 1.25-ounce shots of hard alcohol in each?
  - Answer: Remember that each 1.25-ounce shot classifies as a drink, so these two mixed drinks are actually six standard drinks.

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**Reducing Risk**

- Set a limit that is defined by standard drinks.
- Don't accept a drink if she doesn't know what's in it.
- Don't leave a drink unattended.
- Drink for quality instead of quantity.

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## INTOXICATION | 5 minutes

### Share:

- Now, let's go back to the questions. What factors contributed to the member getting intoxicated quickly in the scenario?
- When a person drinks, alcohol reaches the stomach and is absorbed into the bloodstream. From the stomach, alcohol moves into the small intestine and continues going into the bloodstream.
- There are four factors that affect the rate of absorption of alcohol:
  1. Having food in a person's stomach: All the alcohol still gets into the body, but it absorbs it more slowly when a person eats prior to drinking or eats while drinking. A person wanting to stay more in control of her night could be sure to eat prior to drinking.
  2. The rate of drinking: The more quickly someone drinks, the more quickly the body absorbs alcohol. The opposite is also true—when a person drinks slowly, the rate of absorption is slower. A person wanting to stay more in control of her night could choose to slow down and pace herself.
  3. The concentration or potency of the drink: The more potent/concentrated the drink (e.g., hard alcohol), the more quickly it gets absorbed. A person trying to stay in control of her night could choose drinks higher up in the standard drink conversion chart (e.g., beer instead of hard alcohol) or, if she has made the choice to drink hard alcohol, could put extra ice in her drink or add more mixer to the drink so that it is less potent. The type of mixer used can be a factor, because the fourth impact to absorption is...
  4. The effervescence of the drink: The more bubbly a drink is, the more quickly it gets absorbed. This means that mixed drinks with a flat mixer, like juice, will be absorbed slower than a drink of the same potency made with a carbonated mixer.

### Discuss:

- Now back to our final question from the scenario. Why might the member have had difficulty sticking to her goal?

### Share:

- Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant. This does not mean it makes you depressed; rather, it depresses (or slows down) the central nervous system (CNS). The CNS controls functions that are voluntary (like walking and talking) and involuntary (like breathing and heart rate). Because alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream, everywhere blood goes, the alcohol goes too. This includes the brain.
- With a CNS depressant in the brain, things like reaction time become more affected as your blood alcohol content (BAC) increases. That is why it is not safe to drink and drive.

#### What has contributed to getting intoxicated quickly?

1. Having food in a person's stomach
2. The rate of drinking
3. The concentration or potency of the drink
4. The effervescence of the drink

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#### Why might she have had difficulty sticking to her goal?

- Alcohol slows down the central nervous system.
  - The central nervous system controls functions that are voluntary (like walking and talking) and involuntary (like breathing and heart rate).
- Alcohol is absorbed into the blood stream.
  - Everywhere blood goes, alcohol goes, including the brain.
- Alcohol affects the brain.
  - Slurred speech, clumsiness, slowed breathing
- Alcohol affects judgment and decision making.
  - Saying things you wouldn't normally say, or doing things you wouldn't normally do

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- As BAC goes up, there are visible signs that the voluntary functions are getting depressed. For example, people slur their speech or get clumsy. At high doses, involuntary functions are slowing down. Breathing can slow and/or be labored or blood pressure and pulse can be lowered. These symptoms constitute “alcohol poisoning.”
- Judgment and decision making worsen from a BAC of .06% and higher, which means people might say something they wouldn’t normally say or do something they wouldn’t normally do once they reach that point. Affected decisions can even include decisions about continuing the use of alcohol.

*The key for participants to understand is that with an impaired judgment, a person who sets a limit will have more difficulty sticking to that limit. By the time that their physical cues suggest that “it’s time to call it a night,” they are no longer at a point where they really pay attention to such cues.*

## SOBERING UP | 5 minutes

### Discuss:

- The rate of sobering up is called oxidation. We already reviewed the four factors that affect absorption. What do you think affects the rate of sobering up, or oxidation?

*Take several guesses from participants.*

- This is a trick question; there are no ways to sober up quickly!
- You might have heard people say to drink water to sober up, and while this will help with the process of re-hydration, it does nothing to the rate of oxidation. However, do note that alcohol is a diuretic, which is associated with dehydration. Dehydration can be related to some “day after” effects.
- You might hear three things typically associated with the perception of feeling more alert—drink coffee, take a cold shower or even exercise. While these might make someone feel more alert, these actions have no actual effect on blood alcohol level.
- Occasionally, people will ask about whether or not vomiting impacts the rate of sobering up—it does not. A person might feel better after throwing up, but this seems to be because it lessens feelings of nausea.
- The key here is that once alcohol is absorbed into the blood stream, its elimination from the body and the various “methods” discussed here do not impact the rate of oxidation.
- Instead, alcohol is burned off because of the action of an enzyme in the liver (*called “alcohol dehydrogenase”—don’t worry about mentioning this by name, it’s just here in case you’re asked about it.*). As a whole, people burn off alcohol at a very predictable rate. With each hour that passes, BAC is lowered by .016% per hour.

#### What do you think affects the rate of sobering up, or oxidation?

This is a trick question; there are no ways to sober up quickly!

You might have heard people say:

- Drink water
  - While this will help the process of re-hydration, it does nothing to the rate of oxidation.
- Drink coffee
  - While it may help you feel more alert, it has no actual effect on blood alcohol level.
- Take a cold shower
  - While it may help you feel more alert, it has no actual effect on blood alcohol level.
- Vomit
  - A person might feel better after throwing up, but this seems to be because it lessens feelings of nausea.

THESE ARE ALL MISCONCEPTIONS

ONLY ONE WAY TO SOBER UP: BY ELIMINATION



Use the flip chart to work with the participants to do the math on how long it will take to sober up at various BACs.

- If someone is at .16% at midnight, it will take until 10 a.m. before BAC is back down to 0.0%.
- If someone is at .2% or higher at midnight, the person will stay intoxicated into the following afternoon.

If someone is at .08% at midnight, it will take until 5 a.m. before BAC is back down to 0.0%.	
Midnight	.08%
1:00 a.m.	$.08\% - .016\% = .064\%$
2:00 a.m.	$.064\% - .016\% = .048\%$
3:00 a.m.	$.048\% - .016\% = .032\%$
4:00 a.m.	$.032\% - .016\% = .016\%$
5:00 a.m.	$.016\% - .016\% = 0.0\%$

### Discuss:

- What implications do you think this has?
- If not mentioned by the group, explain the implications for safety, including drinking and driving. Most students understand that drinking and driving is dangerous and may even choose to stay the night at a friend's house after drinking to, presumably, avoid the behavior. Unfortunately, it's possible that the person could even be driving with a positive BAC the following day.

## THE SEX EFFECT | 5 minutes

Distribute "Approximate BAC Levels as a Function of Number of Drinks and Time, Determined by Weight of Females" handout.

### Share:

- Let's think about another scenario.
  - » One of your sisters is at a party and is keeping up with the drinking of one of her male friends. She weighs 120 pounds; he weighs 160 pounds. They both have five drinks over three hours. As the night progresses, she is getting much more intoxicated than her male friend. What's going on?

Allow participants to respond.

- Alcohol affects sexes very differently.
- Within one sex, two people of different weights drinking the same amount of alcohol over the same amount of time will reach different blood alcohol levels. The lighter person will become more intoxicated. If you have a male and female of the same weight drinking the same amount over the same time, the female will become more intoxicated.

Blood Alcohol Level	
If someone is at .08% at midnight, it will take until 5 a.m. before BAC is back down to 0.0%.	
Midnight	.08%
1:00 a.m.	$.08\% - .016\% = .064\%$
2:00 a.m.	$.064\% - .016\% = .048\%$
3:00 a.m.	$.048\% - .016\% = .032\%$
4:00 a.m.	$.032\% - .016\% = .016\%$
5:00 a.m.	$.016\% - .016\% = 0.0\%$

Blood Alcohol Level	
• If someone is at .16% at midnight, it will take until 10 a.m. before BAC is back down to 0.0%.	
If someone is at .08% at midnight, it will take until 10 a.m. before BAC is back down to 0.0%.	
Midnight	.08%
1:00 a.m.	$.08\% - .016\% = .064\%$
2:00 a.m.	$.064\% - .016\% = .048\%$
3:00 a.m.	$.048\% - .016\% = .032\%$
4:00 a.m.	$.032\% - .016\% = .016\%$
5:00 a.m.	$.016\% - .016\% = 0.0\%$

Blood Alcohol Level	
• If someone is at .2% or higher at midnight, the person will stay intoxicated into the following afternoon.	
If someone is at .2% at midnight, the person will stay intoxicated into the following afternoon.	
Midnight	.08%
1:00 a.m.	$.08\% - .016\% = .064\%$
2:00 a.m.	$.064\% - .016\% = .048\%$
3:00 a.m.	$.048\% - .016\% = .032\%$
4:00 a.m.	$.032\% - .016\% = .016\%$
5:00 a.m.	$.016\% - .016\% = 0.0\%$

What implications do you think this has?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vomiting</li> <li>• Drinking and driving</li> <li>• Getting into a physical fight</li> <li>• Damaging relationships with friends or significant others</li> <li>• Blacking out</li> <li>• Drunk texting or posting on social media</li> <li>• Engaging in sexual encounters</li> </ul>	

The Sex Effect	
	
160 lbs.	120 lbs.

- There are four reasons for this:
  1. On average, females have a higher fat content in their bodies than males do. This translates to a lesser fluid volume. In other words, a female has less blood going through her bloodstream than a man of the same weight. This results in alcohol getting more concentrated in the bloodstream of a female.
  2. Remember that we all have a liver enzyme that results in the oxidation of alcohol. Males actually have a gastric version of this enzyme. Research suggests that females have, at best, trace amounts of this same gastric enzyme. This means that males have a head start at burning off alcohol.
- The next two reasons are primarily differences within females:
  3. There may be a monthly variability in BAC for some people. Depending on where a person may be in their menstrual cycle, it can impact the BAC they attain, and it will take them longer to burn off alcohol since the rate of oxidation will actually change. This seems to be the case during the phase right before a person's next period.
  4. If a person is taking an oral contraceptive (birth control pills), not only will they feel more intoxicated when they do drink, they will stay intoxicated longer.
- Let's revisit our scenario.
  - » The male in this example will be at a blood alcohol level of .069%, meaning that while there is some reaction impairment and his judgment is starting to be affected, he is not yet legally intoxicated. The female in this example will be at a blood alcohol level of .139%, meaning she is actually twice as intoxicated as the man, has a clear deterioration in judgment, a clear deterioration in motor coordination, and could even be at risk for blacking out depending on the factors we discussed.

### Discuss:

- Based on this information, what implications does this have when you are consuming alcohol at a party?

*Highlight the importance of knowing what one brings to the table based on weight/size and sex.*

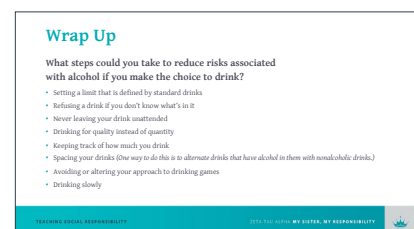
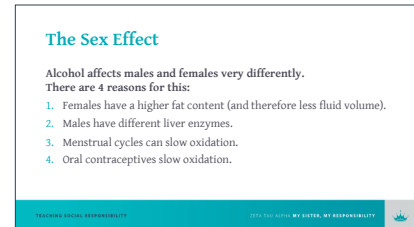
## WRAP UP | 5 minutes

### Discuss:

- What does all of this information mean to you as an individual?
- What does it mean to you as a chapter?

*They should consider their own decisions about alcohol use and the safety of their sisters.*

- What steps could you take to reduce risks associated with alcohol if you make the choice to drink?





*Revisit the suggestions above:*

- *Setting a limit that is defined by standard drinks*
- *Refusing a drink if you don't know what's in it*
- *Never leaving your drink unattended*
- *Drinking for quality instead of quantity*

*Also consider these suggestions:*

- *Keeping track of how much you drink*
- *Spacing out your drinks (One way to do this is to alternate drinks that have alcohol in them with non-alcoholic drinks.)*
- *Avoiding or altering your approach to drinking games*
- *Drinking slowly if you choose to drink*



# BAC LEVELS AND EFFECTS

## BLOOD ALCOHOL CONTENT

Alcohol's effects are roughly predictable from the amount of alcohol in the bloodstream, assuming that no tolerance has been developed. The following list indicates what effects alcohol typically has at several blood alcohol content levels.

.02%	Light and moderate drinkers begin to feel some effect (about one drink).
.04%	Most people begin to feel relaxed.
.06%	Judgment is somewhat impaired; people are less able to make rational decisions about their capabilities, e.g., driving.
.08%	Muscle coordination and driving skills are definitely impaired, and the risk of nausea and slurred speech increases.
.10%	Although reaction time is affected after the first drink, there is a clear deterioration of reaction time and control at this level.
.15%	Balance and movement are impaired. Risk of blackouts, accidents, nausea, passing out and hangovers.
.30%	Many people lose consciousness.
.40%	Most people lose consciousness, and some die.
.45%	Breathing stops and death occurs.

*Note: These effects occur for people who have not developed a high tolerance for alcohol. For people with high tolerances, these effects may not occur until higher levels of intoxication. Heavy drinkers must therefore consume more alcohol to achieve the same effects as moderate drinkers, which costs more money and is more harmful to the body.*

## ONE DRINK





# APPROXIMATE BAC LEVELS

100 lb. Female	NUMBER OF HOURS							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
NUMBER 1 OF DRINKS	.029	.013	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	.074	.058	.042	.026	.010	-	-	-
3	.119	.103	.087	.071	.055	.039	.023	.007
4	.164	.148	.132	.116	.100	.084	.068	.052
5	.209	.193	.177	.161	.145	.129	.113	.097
6	.254	.238	.222	.206	.190	.174	.158	.142
7	.299	.283	.267	.251	.235	.219	.203	.187
8	.344	.328	.312	.296	.280	.264	.248	.232
9	.389	.373	.357	.341	.325	.309	.293	.277
10	.434	.418	.402	.386	.370	.354	.338	.322
11	.479	.463	.447	.431	.415	.399	.383	.367
12	.524	.508	.492	.476	.460	.444	.428	.412

140 lb. Female	NUMBER OF HOURS							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
NUMBER 1 OF DRINKS	.016	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	.048	.032	.016	-	-	-	-	-
3	.080	.064	.048	.032	.016	-	-	-
4	.112	.096	.080	.064	.048	.032	.016	-
5	.144	.128	.112	.096	.080	.064	.048	.032
6	.176	.160	.144	.128	.112	.096	.080	.064
7	.209	.193	.177	.161	.145	.129	.113	.097
8	.241	.225	.209	.193	.177	.161	.145	.129
9	.273	.257	.241	.225	.209	.193	.177	.161
10	.305	.289	.273	.257	.241	.225	.209	.193
11	.337	.321	.305	.289	.273	.257	.241	.225
12	.369	.353	.337	.321	.305	.289	.273	.257

180 lb. Female	NUMBER OF HOURS							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
NUMBER 1 OF DRINKS	.009	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	.034	.018	.002	-	-	-	-	-
3	.059	.043	.027	.011	-	-	-	-
4	.084	.068	.052	.036	.020	.004	-	-
5	.109	.093	.077	.061	.045	.029	.013	-
6	.134	.118	.102	.086	.070	.054	.038	.022
7	.159	.143	.127	.111	.095	.079	.063	.047
8	.184	.168	.152	.136	.120	.104	.088	.072
9	.209	.193	.177	.161	.145	.129	.113	.097
10	.234	.218	.202	.186	.170	.154	.138	.122
11	.259	.243	.227	.211	.195	.179	.163	.147
12	.284	.268	.252	.236	.220	.204	.188	.172

120 lb. Female	NUMBER OF HOURS							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
NUMBER 1 OF DRINKS	.021	.005	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	.059	.043	.027	.011	-	-	-	-
3	.096	.080	.064	.048	.032	.016	-	-
4	.134	.118	.102	.086	.070	.054	.038	.022
5	.171	.155	.139	.123	.107	.091	.075	.059
6	.209	.193	.177	.161	.145	.129	.113	.097
7	.246	.230	.214	.198	.182	.166	.150	.134
8	.284	.268	.252	.236	.220	.204	.188	.172
9	.321	.305	.289	.273	.257	.241	.225	.209
10	.359	.343	.327	.311	.295	.279	.263	.247
11	.396	.380	.364	.348	.332	.316	.300	.284
12	.434	.418	.402	.386	.370	.354	.338	.322

160 lb. Female	NUMBER OF HOURS							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
NUMBER 1 OF DRINKS	.012	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	.040	.024	.008	-	-	-	-	-
3	.068	.052	.036	.020	.004	-	-	-
4	.096	.080	.064	.048	.032	.016	-	-
5	.124	.108	.092	.076	.060	.044	.028	.012
6	.152	.136	.120	.104	.088	.072	.056	.040
7	.180	.164	.148	.132	.116	.100	.084	.068
8	.209	.193	.177	.161	.145	.129	.113	.097
9	.237	.221	.205	.189	.173	.157	.141	.125
10	.265	.249	.233	.217	.201	.185	.169	.153
11	.293	.277	.261	.245	.229	.213	.197	.181
12	.321	.305	.289	.273	.257	.241	.225	.209

200 lb. Female	NUMBER OF HOURS							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
NUMBER 1 OF DRINKS	.006	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	.029	.013	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	.051	.035	.019	.003	-	-	-	-
4	.074	.058	.042	.026	.010	-	-	-
5	.096	.080	.064	.048	.032	.016	-	-
6	.119	.103	.087	.071	.055	.039	.023	.007
7	.141	.125	.109	.093	.077	.061	.045	.029
8	.164	.148	.132	.116	.100	.084	.068	.052
9	.186	.170	.154	.138	.122	.106	.090	.074
10	.209	.193	.177	.161	.145	.129	.113	.097
11	.231	.215	.199	.183	.167	.151	.135	.119
12	.254	.238	.222	.206	.190	.174	.158	.142

**ONE DRINK = 4 ozs. wine; or  
1 cocktail; or  
12 ozs. beer; or  
1 oz. shot**

These charts are for your information and are not intended to convey that drinking is safe. Drinking alcoholic beverages is unlawful for those under 21 years of age.

