



YOUR HAPPY HOUR MAY BE VIRTUAL, BUT YOUR BAC IS REAL!

KNOW THE STRENGTH, AMOUNT AND TIME.

Participating in virtual happy hours is a great way to stay connected and “see” friends during social distancing; but if attendees don’t practice smart social habits, they can easily reach dangerous levels of intoxication when they thought they only had “a few drinks.” While this might be true in the number of actual cups consumed, the number of “standard drinks” in those cups could actually be double, triple or more.

It’s important to track how much alcohol you’re actually consuming in order to have a safe, responsible time any time you choose to drink. This conversation starter will help you understand how easy it is to consume an unhealthy amount of alcohol in a short period of time, while thinking it was only “one or two drinks.” This resource also includes some strategies you can utilize for personal risk reduction when consuming alcohol during a virtual happy hour.

First, let’s make sure we are all on the same page when it comes to the definition of a standard drink. A *standard drink* is any beverage that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ an ounce of ethanol.

- ✓ 12 ounces of beer (4.5% average ABV)
- ✓ 12 ounces hard seltzer/cider (5% ABV)
- ✓ 4 ounces of wine (11.6% average ABV)
- ✓ 1½ ounces of 80-proof hard alcohol (40% ABV)

When thinking about what constitutes a standard drink, reflect on what types of alcohol you usually drink and if you are aware of the strength of those drinks.

The strength of the alcohol matters, but equally important is how much you drink and at what rate you consume it.

The amount is how much alcohol you are actually consuming. Think of it this way: six beers (72 ounces) is a lot when you think of the liquid volume alone. However, six shots only totals to 7.5 ounces—that’s less than a juice box! However, these amounts are equal in terms of standard drinks.

There are a variety of factors that affect how your body absorbs alcohol:

- The higher the concentration of alcohol in the beverage, the faster your body absorbs it in the bloodstream.
- The faster you drink, the faster your body absorbs the alcohol.
- Carbonated drinks result in quicker absorption.
- An empty stomach speeds up absorption.

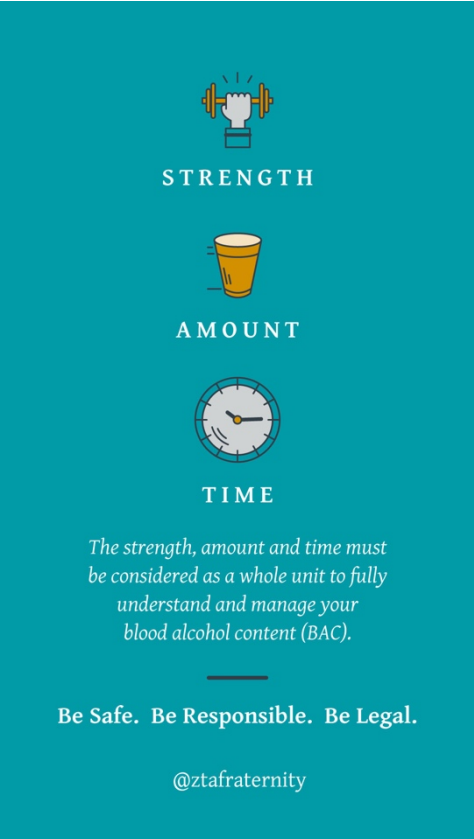
In addition to considering the strength and the amount of alcohol, think about how the length of time you drink factors into intoxication levels (more commonly known as blood alcohol content/BAC).

- As a general rule of thumb, it takes the body approximately one hour to fully process the alcohol in one standard drink.
- When drinking, the effects of each drink accumulate, causing your BAC to rise exponentially.
- Depending on various intoxication rate factors (strength, amount and time), a person's BAC level can be different each time they drink.
- You have to keep in mind that we are talking about **measured drinks** here; none of this will be true if the drinks are not standard drinks.

What are some guidelines you can establish for yourself to drink safely and responsibly?

- Set a limit for yourself before you join the virtual gathering. Remember to measure your drinks to ensure they meet the definition of "standard drinks."
- Keep track of how much you are drinking.
- Have a "social buddy" on the call to help you monitor your drinks and behavior. They can text you a discreet heads-up when you are reaching your limit or acting inappropriately.
- Space out your drinks over time.
- Don't refill your drink just because others refill theirs.
- Stay away from shots.
- Make sure to drink water, too.
- Don't play drinking games.

If you are making the choice to drink while online, please develop a personal plan to do so safely. Help each other remember that *My Sister, My Responsibility*® still works as virtual philosophy. Any steps you take to reduce risk and consume less alcohol when you drink are steps in the right direction.



STRENGTH

AMOUNT

TIME

The strength, amount and time must be considered as a whole unit to fully understand and manage your blood alcohol content (BAC).

Be Safe. Be Responsible. Be Legal.

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