



Driving While Intoxicated

The Effects of Alcohol, Medication and Illegal Drugs



Never Drink and Drive.

If you choose to drink and drive, be aware impairment begins with your first drink. Alcohol is a powerful drug, medically classified as a depressant. Even small amounts of alcohol have been shown to dull reflexes and reaction time. It can blur vision and cause drowsiness – a dangerous combination when you're behind the wheel. No amount of experience with driving can compensate for intoxication. Other factors – including your body weight, your gender, how much you've eaten and how fast you're drinking – also affect impairment. It is impossible for anyone to predict how alcohol will affect him or her on any given occasion. This leaves only one option: either drink or drive, but never do both. One drink could have serious consequences for you or for others. Every drink, especially the first, takes influence over your body and your mind. Don't drive with dulled senses. Find a sober driver or take time to sober up before you drive a motor vehicle.

Drugs and Medication Will Affect Your Judgment.

Driving while intoxicated refers to more than just illegal drugs and alcohol. Even prescription drugs can slow your reactions and affect your judgment. If your medication lists drowsiness as a possible side effect, it's best not to get behind the wheel. Over-the-counter drugs may also cause driving impairment. From cold drops to nasal sprays to pain pills, medication can be a dangerous agent to a driver. Many medications affect judgment, especially if they are taken in combination with alcohol. When you notice the effects of medication, avoid driving until the side effects cease.

If you know you will be drinking, or if medications you're taking may affect your ability to drive responsibly, there are other options besides driving yourself home.

Choose a driver who agrees not to drink. A sober driver is the safest driver. Remember, a designated driver is someone who drinks NO alcohol at all, *not* the person who has consumed the fewest drinks at the end of the night.

Stop drinking in time to sober up. It takes the body approximately one hour to eliminate one drink from your system. If you plan to drive home later, stop drinking in time to let all the drinks you've consumed exit your system before you head home.

Consider alternative transportation. If you find yourself late in the evening with no plan for getting home safely, find a sober friend to drive you home; call a cab; or take public transportation. Walk home only if you live close and have safe streets to travel – intoxicated pedestrians have the same impaired judgment as drunk drivers, so don't think you can beat traffic on busy streets and highways.

Stay where you are. If you can spend the night at a friend's house, you avoid the terrible consequences of Driving While Intoxicated – for you and everyone else.