

the RED CUP Q&A

separating alcohol fact from fiction

wildfact

In Arizona, it is illegal for a person under the age of 21 to drive with any alcohol in his/her body (zero tolerance for underage drinkers who drive).

If I have one “standard” drink (e.g. wine, beer), is it okay for me to drive?

If you wait 1-3 hours until your blood alcohol concentration (BAC) returns to zero you will be much safer. The body takes approximately 45 minutes to absorb the alcohol in a drink. Then it takes an additional one to two hours to metabolize and eliminate the alcohol. Time to “zero BAC” is one hour for a 200 lb. male, and two hours for a 140 lb. female.

Hours to Zero BAC (1 Drink)		
Weight (lbs.)	Female	Male
100	3 hrs.	2.5 hrs.
120	2.5 hrs.	2 hrs.
140	2 hrs.	2 hrs.
160	2 hrs.	2 hrs.
180	1.5 hrs.	1.5 hrs.
200	1.5 hrs.	1 hr.



Gender is clearly a factor. If you are female, don't compare yourself to your male friends when it comes to

drinking. It will take you longer to metabolize alcohol because women have less of the enzyme, alcohol dehydrogenase, than men have. Weight is also an important factor in BAC: if you weigh more, your BAC will be lower than someone weighing less than you do—even if you consume the same amount of alcohol.

While one standard drink won't put you anywhere close to the 0.08% BAC legal limit, recent research indicates that even 0.01% BAC is associated with significantly more dangerous accidents than 0.00% BAC. Researchers at the University of California at San Diego found that accident severity increased significantly even when drivers were merely “buzzed”—well below the 0.08% BAC level of DUI. **In short, any alcohol is more dangerous than NO alcohol.** It's always best to use a sober designated driver.

References: *Addiction*, Phillips & Brewer, 2011 and www.AZ.gov

Got a question about alcohol? Email it to redcup@email.arizona.edu



www.health.arizona.edu



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