

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 body. There is zero tolerance for underage drinkers who drive.

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

It depends on how long you wait, how much you weigh, and your gender. One “standard” drink (a 1 oz. shot of liquor, a 12 oz. beer, or 5 oz. of wine) will put most people at 0.02-0.04% BAC. Waiting 1-3 hours until your blood alcohol concentration (BAC) returns to zero will make you much safer.

The body takes approximately 45 minutes to absorb the alcohol in one drink. Then it takes an additional 1-2 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 and weight are two important factors for BAC. If you are female, don't compare yourself to your male friends. It will take you longer to metabolize alcohol because women have less of the enzyme, alcohol dehydrogenase, than men. And, if you weigh less than your drinking buddy, your BAC will be higher than theirs – even if you consume the same amount of alcohol.

While one standard drink won't put you near 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-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.

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



www.health.arizona.edu



CAMPUS HEALTH

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