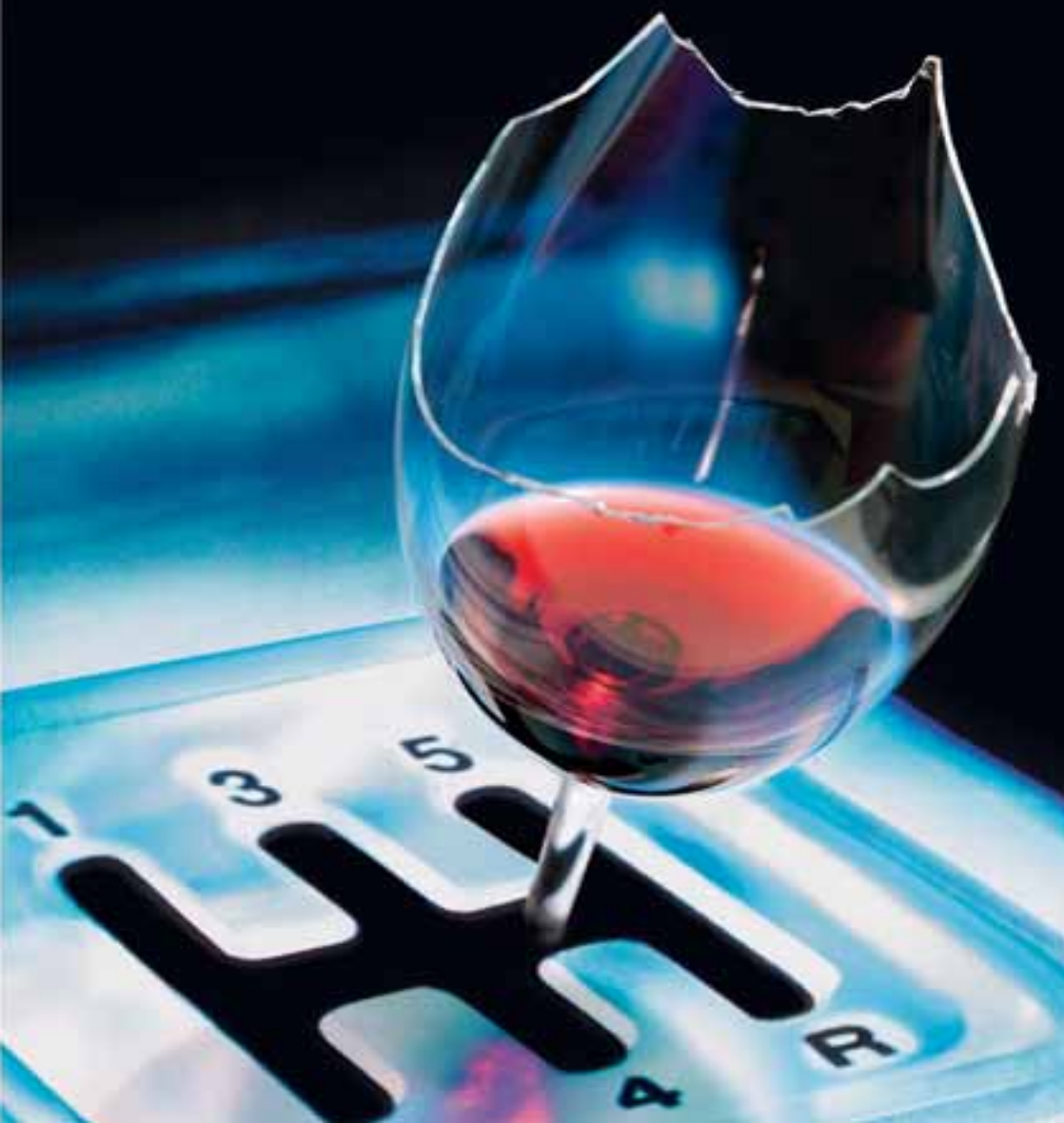


*drink  
or drive*

---



# ***What happens when you drink alcohol?***

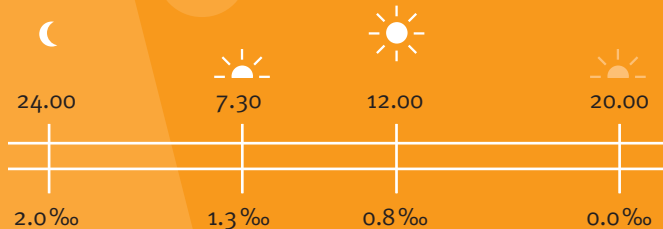
## **What happens inside your body?**

A small percentage of the alcohol is absorbed through the mouth and stomach. 95% reaches the body via the intestine. If the alcohol only reaches the intestine in small amounts, for example if taken with a meal, the effect on the body (especially the brain) is clearly less than when it reaches this region in large amounts over a short time. The rate at which alcohol is absorbed also depends on the type of alcoholic drink. Fizzy alcoholic drinks (beer, sparkling wines, alcopops etc.) will be much more quickly absorbed.

## **How is alcohol broken down in the body?**

### **Can this breakdown be accelerated?**

Alcohol takes about 20 minutes to be absorbed into the body. After that, it begins to be broken down in the liver. A healthy liver can break down 0.1 to 0.15 parts per thousand each hour. This process cannot be accelerated. Coffee, a cold shower or sport may change your physical condition, but the alcohol level remains the same. It is good for the body to drink water, but this too doesn't change the alcohol level (no "thinning").



If you have been drinking until midnight (2 parts per thousand), then at 7.30am you will still have 1.3 parts per thousand in your blood!

# Alcohol and driving



Driving ability is already compromised from 0.2 parts per thousand. It is important to take other factors, such as tiredness, stress, medications, high spirits or anger, into consideration as these can significantly increase the effects of alcohol and thus further reduce driving ability.



## **0.2 – 0.3 parts per thousand**

Driving style becomes more reckless and faster. This is enough to cause mistakes in complex situations. Physical coordination is impaired.



## **0.4 – 0.5 parts per thousand**

Sensory impressions are inaccurately interpreted. Peripheral vision is impaired. (Traffic signals may be overlooked.) Red traffic lights can no longer be clearly discerned.



## **0.6 – 0.8 parts per thousand**

Major driving errors are increasingly likely. Reaction time is seriously slowed.



## **Above 0.8 parts per thousand**

Coordinated perception of position and speed and control of steering is seriously disrupted. Other people and objects cannot be clearly discerned from one another (awareness of pedestrians, cyclists, parked cars etc. comes too late).

# *How can one measure blood alcohol level?*

There is a simple way to estimate anyone's blood alcohol level. This is more reliable than a breath test with the inaccurate devices now on the market.

Blood alcohol level depends on both gender and body weight, and for a given amount of alcohol consumed will be highest for a slim woman and lowest for a heavy man.

A rule of thumb for estimation is the 3-to-1 rule: After one "standard glass" (see below) nobody will have more than 0.3 parts per thousand of alcohol in their blood. The body breaks down at least 0.1 parts per thousand each hour.



Beer/Alcopops  
1 Litre  
ca. 40 g  
1 glass (3 dl)  
ca. 12 g



Spirits  
1 Litre  
ca. 350 g  
1 glass (0.2 dl)  
ca. 7 g



Wines  
1 Litre  
ca. 80 – 100 g  
1 glass (1.5 dl)  
ca. 12 – 15 g



Liqueurs  
1 Litre  
ca. 200 – 280 g  
1 glass (0.5 dl)  
ca. 10 – 14 g

## **Simple calculation of blood alcohol level**

Example: a woman who weighs 50 kg drinks 3 glasses of wine:

$$\frac{36 \text{ (number of grams of alcohol)}}{50 \text{ (weight in kg)} \times 0.6^*} = 1.2 \text{ parts per thousand}$$

\* For a man, the factor 0.6 must be replaced by 0.7

It is even easier with the "Promillometer":

**www.fachstelle-asn.ch** (German, French and Italian only)

# ***Cannabis and driving***

Cannabis consumption reduces driving ability. Experiments have proven that cannabis clearly impairs competence to drive for at least three hours. Concentration, coordination, vision and ability to react are all reduced. One difference from alcohol is that many – but not all – people overestimate their driving ability less after using cannabis and therefore, as a rule, try to drive more carefully. Alcohol and cannabis are often taken together, in which case the negative effects of both are compounded. This combination is therefore especially dangerous in road traffic!

## ***Other drugs and medications and driving***

Even experienced drivers may, after taking medication, lack the physical and mental resources to decide swiftly and correctly in critical situations. Drowsiness is a side effect of many medications. Therefore the principle is: Whenever you are prescribed medications by your doctor, ask him or her whether it is absolutely OK for you to drive after taking them.

What applies to alcohol and medications applies even more strongly to street drugs. Anyone who has taken drugs – be it cocaine, heroin or ecstasy – should under no circumstances drive. When combined with alcohol, the unfavourable effects of medications and drugs are many times worse. Therefore alcohol consumption should be completely stopped after any use of medications or drugs.

# ***The legal consequences of an accident under the influence of alcohol or drugs***

## **What does the law say?**

Anyone convicted of driving a motor vehicle in a drunken state will be imprisoned or fined (Art. 91, Abs. 1 Strassenverkehrsgesetz, SVG). The same applies to anyone driving a motor vehicle while unfit to drive due to drugs or medications. (Art. 90, SVG). Drunkenness is defined as a proven blood alcohol level of 0.8 part per thousand or more (“certified drunkenness”). Above 0.8 parts per thousand, the driver’s licence must be surrendered for at least three months and, for a subsequent offence, at least twelve months.

Since January 2005 a new threshold level for “ordinary drunkenness” of 0.5 parts per thousand is punishable with a fine. However, it doesn’t necessarily lead to confiscation of the driver’s licence. Incidentally, if you refuse to take an alcohol or drug test you will be taken by the police to the nearest hospital where you must submit yourself for testing. This costs about Fr. 300 and lasts several hours. You are therefore strongly advised not to refuse a test.

## **How do insurers deal with alcohol- and drug-related accidents?**

In the case of accidents due to gross negligence – which includes driving under the influence of drink or drugs – insurance providers reserve the right to curtail payment. For example, a comprehensive policy may only pay for some of the damage to the insured vehicle, or may not even pay at all. Personal liability insurance that must pay third parties entitled to claim will demand part of the costs back (recourse). In the case of personal injury, per diem compensation and benefits may be curtailed in advance. The cost of an accident involving injuries can rise very fast to several hundred thousand Francs.

# *Safe*

## *leisure travel*

Despite night buses and other attractive offers, the private car is still the most frequently used mode of leisure transport. The combination of driving and clubbing, family- and wedding-parties or attending sporting events is tricky, and not only because alcohol and other drugs may be consumed. Strong light effects impair sight, loud music damages hearing, and the way home may be in the dark, often on wet or even snow-covered roads. In short, the driver finds him or herself confronted by the responsibility for driving with restricted ability under especially difficult conditions.

### *The three golden rules:*

- **Drink or drive: whoever drives doesn't drink!**
- **Organise a "sober" travel service for yourself before the entertainment begins.**
- **Avoid absolutely any combination of alcohol and other drugs or medications!**

FACHSTELLE **ASN**

ALKOHOL- UND DROGENPRÄVENTION  
IM STRASSENVERKEHR



Fachstelle ASN, Ottikerstrasse 10, 8006 Zürich, Tel. 044 360 26 00, Fax 044 360 26 05  
info@fachstelle-asn.ch, www.fachstelle-asn.ch

Fachstelle für  
Interkulturelle  
Suchtprävention  
**F I S P**

Fachstelle für interkulturelle Suchtprävention  
und Gesundheitsförderung (FISP)  
Kehlhofstrasse 12, 8003 Zürich  
Tel. 043 960 01 60, Fax 043 960 01 61  
fisp@bluewin.ch, www.fisp-zh.ch

**migesplus**

**Croix-Rouge suisse**  
**Schweizerisches Rotes Kreuz**   
**Croce Rossa Svizzera**

Schweizerisches Rotes Kreuz  
migesplus  
Werkgasse 18, 3084 Wabern  
Tel. 031 960 75 75, Fax 031 960 75 60  
info@migesplus.ch, www.migesplus.ch

## Imprint

Copyright © aktualisierte Ausgabe 2007

**Specialist Centre “Say no to drinking and driving!”**

In collaboration with the Swiss Traffic Safety Authority and with financial support from migesplus

Layout, Illustrations: Blitz & Donner, 3037 Herrenschwanden/Bern

Editing: Jan Rintelen, Paul Gisin, Trudi Gisin, Iwan Fuchs

Revision for translation version: Mustafa Ideli, Joseph Oggier (FISP)

Translation: Andrew Fellows

englisch, anglais, inglese