

**MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT ALCOHOL**  
**Mothers Against Drunk Driving**  
[www.madd.org](http://www.madd.org)

Even if you make smart decisions about alcohol, that doesn't mean that other people around you will. Imagine for a moment that you go to a party where there's alcohol, and like a lot of other people, you decided to hang out but not drink. What if one of your friends makes a different choice and ends up drinking way too much? What should you do? What *can* you do?

First of all, if the person drinking has car keys anywhere on them – you should take them away. Make sure those keys stay with someone who is and will stay completely sober. Next, don't let your friend have any more to drink! Stay with them at all times. Even if they stop drinking they won't sober up right away.

There are a lot of myths floating around about ways to help a person sober up, drinking alcohol and what it can do to your body. Check out the real story. And the next time someone tries these lines on you, you'll know your stuff.

**Myth:** *It's none of my business if a friend is drinking too much.*

**Fact:** If you are a real friend, it is your business. Talk to them. Maybe they'll listen. But never get into a car if the driver's been drinking.

**Myth:** *It's okay to drink underage as long as I don't drive.*

**Fact:** Negative. Drinking any amount of alcohol underage is illegal. The minimum drinking age is 21 --- the law in all 50 states.

**Myth:** *Someone can have a few drinks and drive safely.*

**Fact:** Not on your life. Alcohol slows down your ability to think, speak and move. The safest way home is to drive sober or ride with someone who's sober.

**Myth:** *It's just beer. It can't hurt me.*

**Fact:** All alcohol can cause brain damage, especially to brains still developing through age 20. Large amounts of alcohol can also do major damage to your digestive system, heart, liver, stomach and other critical organs as well as losing years from your life.

**Myth:** *The worst thing that can happen is a raging hangover.*

**Fact:** Sorry. If you drink enough alcohol, fast enough, you can get an amount in your body that can kill you in only a few hours.

**Myth:** *A cold shower or a cup of coffee will sober me up.*

**Fact:** Nope. Nothing sobers you up but time. It takes at least an hour for your body to get rid of one drink of alcohol. Nothing can speed it up. Not a shower, coffee, eating, throwing up, nothing.

**Myth:** *You'll get drunk a lot faster with hard alcohol than with a beer or wine cooler.*

**Fact:** Whatever! The percent of alcohol in your blood is what determines how drunk you are. Not the flavors you selected. Alcohol is alcohol.

Myth: *Switching between beer, wine and liquor will make you more drunk than sticking to one type of alcohol.*

Fact: No, it's the size that matters. One "drink" equals one 12-ounce can or bottle of beer, one five-ounce glass of wine or one-and-a-half-ounces of hard liquor. They all have the same amount of alcohol in them. So if someone drinks a 40-ounce bottle of beer, it's actually more like three-and-a-half drinks, not one!

Myth: *Everybody reacts the same to alcohol.*

Fact: Not hardly. There are dozens of factors that affect reactions to alcohol – body weight, time of day, what you've eaten recently, how you feel mentally, body chemistry, your expectations, and list goes on and on.

Myth: *Alcohol makes you more sexy.*

Fact: The more you drink, the less you think. Alcohol may loosen you up and make someone more interested in sex, but it interferes with the body's ability to perform. Then there's pregnancy, AIDS, sexual assault and more to worry about. Not sexy at all.

Myth: *A "blackout" is the same thing as "passing out."*

Fact: Think again. During blackouts, people appear to be awake and acting normally. The scary part is people who drink enough to have a blackout will do things they wouldn't usually do, and the next day they don't remember anything.

Myth: *It's okay to let drunk people "sleep it off."*

Fact: Sometimes it can seem like a person has just fallen asleep, when actually, they drank so much they are unconscious. If you can't wake a person up, or they're semi-conscious but can't actually snap out it, the situation is very dangerous. Don't let them lie on their back or else they could choke on their own vomit. Instead roll them on their side and call for help.

Myth: *Drugs are a bigger problem than alcohol.*

Fact: No way. Alcohol is a drug. More young people die from alcohol than all other illicit drugs combined.

Myth: *People who drink only hurt themselves.*

Fact: You can make some big mistakes when you drink and some consequences can last a lifetime for you and those you love. Every person who drinks has a mother, grandfather, sister, aunt, best friend, boyfriend or someone who worries about them and can be impacted by your actions.

Bottom line: Trust your gut instincts. If it seems bad, it probably is. Don't be afraid to call for help. A little trouble is better than you or your friend being injured or dead.