

December Observance: National Impaired-Driving Prevention Month

What is National Impaired Driving Month?

December is one of the busiest on the nation's roadways, and also one of the most dangerous. With the holidays comes an increase in social events that involve alcohol, and data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration shows that this results in an increase in driving under the influence (DUI) and fatal drunk-driving crashes.

Every day, 28 people in the U.S. die in motor vehicle crashes that involve an alcohol-impaired driver – one death every 53 minutes. This is a time to raise awareness about the consequences of driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs and invite families, educators, healthcare providers, and community leaders to promote responsible decision-making.

Who is most at risk?

Impaired driving includes distracted driving, drugged driving, and drunk driving. In an average year, 30 million Americans drive drunk, and 10 million Americans drive impaired by illicit drugs.

- **Young people:** At all levels of blood alcohol concentration (BAC), the risk of being involved in a crash is greater for young people than for older people.
- **Motorcyclists:** Among motorcyclists killed in fatal crashes in 2014, 29 percent had BACs of 0.08 percent or greater.
- **Drivers with prior driving while intoxicated (DWI) convictions:** Drivers with a BAC of 0.08 percent or higher involved in fatal crashes were seven times more likely to have a prior DWI conviction than drivers with no alcohol in their systems.

Safety tips for the holiday season

No one thinks their holiday celebration will end in tragedy. But for those who include alcohol in their celebrations and then get behind the wheel, this is too often the case. Below are some tips to ensure you and family get home safe:

- Always plan ahead for a safe way home.
- If you've been drinking, use public transportation, a taxi, or Uber; or call a friend or family member.
- If someone you know is drinking, do not let that person get behind the wheel.
- Just because you made the right decision to drive sober, others on the road may not have. Always buckle up, drive with caution, and don't hesitate to call 911 to report a suspected drunk driver.

Smartphone apps

- [DrinkTracker for iOS](#), [AlcoDroid for Android](#)
- [SaferRide for iOS](#), [SaferRide for Android](#)
- [ENDWI](#)
- [Uber](#)

Tips from our docs

This month, our healthy tip is brought to you by **Jan Kovach, MD**, NMHC's Medical Director.

Blood Alcohol Concentration Measurement is the number of drinks listed represents the approximate amount of alcohol that a 160-pound man would need to drink in one hour to reach the listed BAC in each category. A standard drink is equal to 0.6 ounces of pure alcohol. Generally, this amount of pure alcohol is found in:

- 12 ounces of beer (5% alcohol content)
- 5 ounces of wine (12% alcohol content)
- 8 ounces of malt liquor (7% alcohol content)
- 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits or liquor

Effects of alcohol can be felt after just one or two drinks. Many people enjoy a drink without any problems, but binge drinking or drinking heavily over longer periods of time can have very serious consequences. Alcohol misuse not only harms the individual, but also damages relationships and society in general in terms of violence and crime, accidents, and impaired driving.

Additional resources

- [CDC \(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention\)](#)
- [NCADD \(National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence\)](#)
- [SAMHSA \(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration\)](#)