Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC)

Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) is the amount of alcohol in the bloodstream. It is measured in percentages. For instance, having a BAC of 0.10 percent means that a person has 1 part alcohol per 1,000 parts blood in the body. BAC does not depend solely on number of drinks consumed. There are many factors involved when drinking, and each effects your BAC in some way. Here are some things to consider...

- **How much alcohol you drink.**
- **How fast you drink.** The quicker you drink, the higher your peak BAC will be. The liver gets rid of alcohol at the average rate of one drink per hour (12 oz. beer, 5 oz. wine, 1 shot of distilled liquor). If a person drinks faster than this, the remainder will circulate in the blood stream until the liver can get rid of it.
- **Body weight.** Heavier people will be less affected by the same amount of alcohol than lighter people. They have more blood and water in their bodies in which to dilute the alcohol.
- **Food in the stomach.** When there is food in the stomach, alcohol is absorbed slower into the blood stream. The BAC rises more rapidly in those who drink on an empty stomach, because there is no food in which to dilute the alcohol.
- **The type of alcohol you drink.** The stronger a drink is (the higher the alcohol concentration, distilled alcohol first, wine second, beer third) the more quickly it is absorbed. This partially explains why hard liquor has more of an apparent kick than wine or beer.
- **Type of mixer used.** Water and fruit juices mixed with alcohol slow the absorption process, while carbonated beverages will speed it up. Carbon dioxide speeds the alcohol through the stomach and intestine into the bloodstream, creating a rapid rise in BAC.
- **Temperature of the drink.** Warm alcohol is absorbed quicker than cold alcohol.
- **If you are male or female.** Women reach higher BACs faster because they have less water in their bodies and more adipose tissue (fat), which is not easily penetrated by alcohol. Therefore, a man and woman, with all other factors being equal, both drinking the same amount of alcohol will have different BAC levels. Hers will be higher. A woman's menstrual cycle will also affect her rate of absorption. They will experience their highest BACs premenstrually.
- **It is important to remember that alcohol affects each person differently, and even alcohol use at low levels can impair judgment and behavior.** To figure out your possible BAC checkout [http://www.miph.org/area/ft9.html](http://www.miph.org/area/ft9.html).

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For more information on other drugs and health issues see The Wellness Center webpage.