



safety

Alcohol and Trauma

Driving Fatality and Alcohol Facts

- Trauma is the most important, most expensive, and most tragic health problem in the United States. Traumas are not accidents because trauma is usually preventable. One of the most common contributory factors to injury occurrence is alcohol abuse. Alcohol is responsible for approximately half of all trauma deaths and nonfatal injuries in the United States (*American College of Surgeons*)
 - A large number of tragedies which occur everyday—the pain and suffering, the saddened families and friends—could be avoided.
 - Alcohol is a drug
 - Underage drinking is illegal and can have disastrous consequences.
 - Some parents think it is okay to supply alcohol to their teenagers and their friends. It is wrong and it is **against the law**. In Wood County you can face a maximum fine of \$10,000 and/or nine months jail time **for each** minor involved. You can be prosecuted.
 - In Wisconsin, youth are at greater risk for alcohol abuse than all other illicit drugs combined.
 - An alcohol-related motor vehicle crash kills someone every 31 minutes, and nonfatally injures someone every two minutes (*NHTSA 2006*). These alcohol-related deaths and injuries are 100 percent preventable.
- The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) reports teenage drivers have the highest crash risk of any age group, they are less likely to wear seatbelts, and, per mile traveled, they have the highest involvement in motor vehicle crashes of all types.
 - A 2005 report by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration states that motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 15 – 20-year-olds, primarily due to “driver inattention.”
 - Fatal crashes involving 16-year-olds are more likely to occur when other teenagers are in the car, and the risk increases with every additional passenger (*IIHS*).

New Facts from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Traffic Safety Facts

1. In 2007, an estimated 12,998 people were killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes—a decline of 3.7 percent from 13,491 fatalities in 2006.
2. *The good news:* 32 states had decreases in the number of alcohol-impaired driving fatalities in 2007, as compared to 2006.
The bad news: Wisconsin wasn't one of them. Fatalities increased from 307 in 2006, to 313 in 2007—a two percent increase. For 2006 and 2007, over 40 percent of all driving fatalities were alcohol-related.

(Continued on the back.)



Alcohol and Trauma (continued)

- Motorcyclists are also at risk. Nationwide in 2007, alcohol-impaired motorcycle riders increased by 10 percent. Numbers of motorcyclists fatally injured in alcohol-impaired driving crashes increased in Wisconsin from 34 in 2006, to 47 in 2007—a 38.2 percent increase.
- The 21-year-old minimum drinking age prevented an estimated 4,441 drunken driving deaths in the last 5 years.
- Half of the 306 child passengers age 14 and younger who died in alcohol-related crashes in 2006 were riding with drivers who had a BAC level of .08 or higher.
- In 2006, 45 children age 14 years and younger who were killed as pedestrians or bicyclists were hit by alcohol-impaired drivers.

Facts and Myths About Alcohol Use

(the last three are direct quotes from the NHTSA)

Myth: Drinking coffee will help sober me up.

Fact: There's an old saying "give a drunk a cup of coffee and what you have is a wide-awake drunk." Once you drink alcohol, it's in your blood, and there isn't anything that will change that. Coffee might make you feel more awake, but it doesn't change your blood alcohol level. Only time will make you sober.

Myth: *Once I roll down my car window, I am okay to drive.*

Fact: No amount of fresh, chilly air can reverse impairment. You gain nothing by rolling down a window or turning on the air conditioner.

Myth: *I just drive slower after drinking.*

Fact: Many people believe that by driving more slowly, they can compensate for being impaired. The truth is, drunk drivers are dangerous at any speed.

Myth: *All I have to do is splash my face with cold water.*

Fact: Cold water, or even a cold shower, will not sober you up or make you a safer driver.



Brought to you by Trauma Services of Saint Joseph's Hospital

For information on injury prevention programs, contact Amy Schmidt, Injury Prevention Coordinator, 715.387.9600 or amy.schmidt@ministryhealth.org.

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