



## Alcohol Awareness

Many myths exist about the effects of alcohol on specific individuals. "Whiskey makes me angry," "Wine gives me a headache," "I never get drunk off beer," "Don't mix clear and colored liquors." All of these statements hold some merit because every "body" is different. However, there are some universal truths about alcohol.

Many people mistake one glass as a single serving of alcohol. Actually 12 ounces of beer (regular size can or bottle), 1 ¼ ounces of liquor (one standard shot glass), and 5 ounces of wine (standard wine glass ¾ full) all have the same amount of pure alcohol. The only differences in these three types of alcoholic drinks are the other additives in each.

Whenever a person consumes one alcoholic drink their Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) goes up. Consuming more drinks forces the BAC higher. In Michigan, the legal BAC limit is .08%. The average person requires one hour to process a single drink of alcohol out of the body. This time can be different for different people. Gender plays a role in alcohol processing, as women process alcohol a little more slowly than men. Age also plays a role in processing alcohol, as older adults will process alcohol slower than younger adults. In any person, too much alcohol can be extremely toxic to a human body. Consuming too much alcohol (binge drinking, for example) actually causes the body to turn off, depressing the lungs, brain, and heart until

they cannot function enough to keep a person alive.

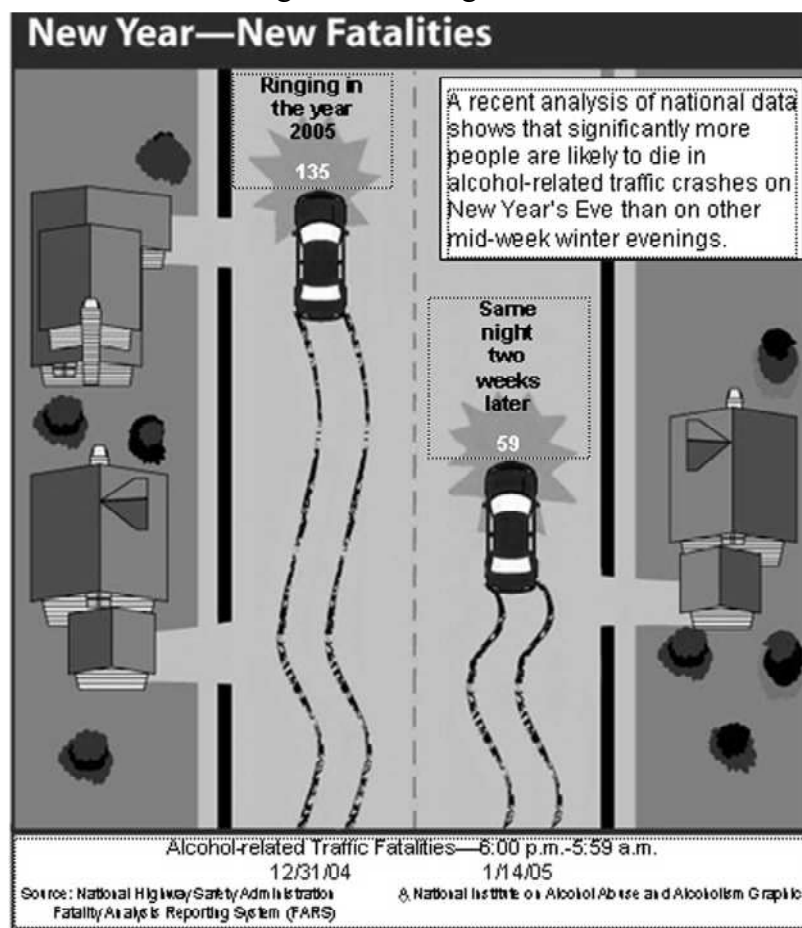
In Michigan it is illegal for a person under 21 years old to possess any alcohol. If a person is caught with a BAC .08% or above they can be taken to jail. If they are caught operating a vehicle they can be prosecuted for Operating While Impaired (OWI) or Driving Under the Influence (DUI). Each of these offenses carries heavy fines and penalties.

If you have been around a person who drank too much alcohol you understand that people can make bad decisions when they get drunk. Along with the health problems that come from drinking in excess, the decisions a person makes when drunk can have lasting effects.

Impaired judgment can lead to violence, unwanted sexual encounters, spouse or child abuse, and driving while drunk to name a few.

While the myths are abundant, the truths give you the information to use and not abuse alcohol. Remember, you can always choose not to drink! If you do drink, always have a designated driver. If you are asked to be the driver, take your turn—your friends will owe you one!

Each year, alcohol-related traffic fatalities on New Year's Eve are up to four times higher than a similar night in the winter (see graphic below). Remember the facts about alcohol, and take extra caution on the roads that night.



Special thanks to Nate Hill, Prevention Specialist, for his help with this article!

The Berrien County Health Department has five locations to serve you:

Benton Harbor		Niles	Three Oaks
769 Pipestone	M-139 Office	1205 N. Front St.	21 N. Elm
P.O. Box 706	2106 S. M-139	684-2800	756-2008
926-7121	927-5623		

Or visit us on the web at [www.bchdmi.org](http://www.bchdmi.org)

### Berrien County Health

**Department:**  
Preventing Disease,  
Prolonging Life and  
Protecting the  
Health of the  
Community.



### Healthy Habits in December!

What a wonderful time to give yourself and your family the gift of good health! With a few simple changes, you can develop healthy habits to last a lifetime! The Health Department will provide information about stress relief, exercise, healthy eating, alcohol awareness and New Year's resolutions. For more information about any of these topics, **please call the health department at 926-7121.**

### Alcohol Facts

If you are a person over the age of 21 who chooses to drink you carry a large responsibility on your shoulders. It is the decisions you make while drinking that could impact your future and the futures of people around you. If you choose to drink be responsible.

Some quick hints to limit intoxication include:

- Drink a non-alcoholic beverage between drinks
- Eat a balanced meal before you start drinking
- Limit yourself and stick to it

While these tips can help you become less intoxicated in the first place, once you are intoxicated, only time can make you sober again! Caffeine will not make you more sober—only more alert.

To get involved in preventing alcohol-related death and injury, come to the Berrien County Alcohol Taskforce, which meets on the 4th Thursday of every month at noon at the Health Department at 2106 S. M-139. For more information, call Nate Hill at 927-5698.



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