

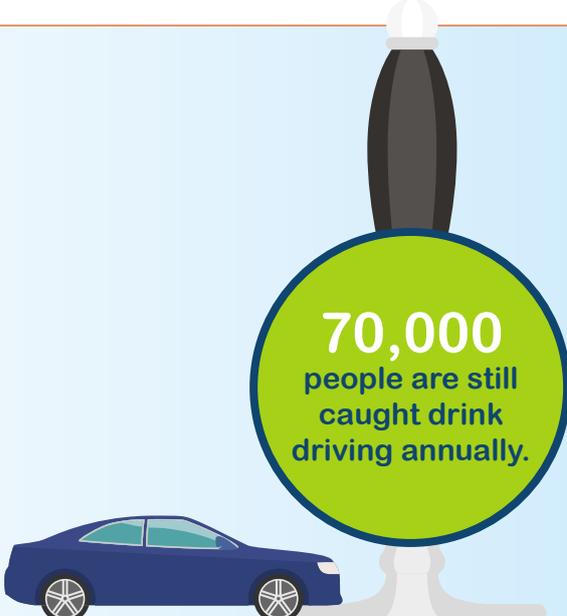
DRINK AND DRUG-RELATED DRIVING



Know the dangers

We all know that drink driving, and driving while under the influence of drugs, is dangerous. But, even as this behaviour has become increasingly socially unacceptable, a huge number of related accidents and convictions still occur every year.

In this guide we attempt to give drivers the key facts and pragmatic advice on the risks and penalties faced by those that don't follow the rules.



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Drink driving – the facts

More than half a million drivers are stopped and breathalysed each year by the police, with more breath tests carried out in December than any other month.

Despite 30 years of drink drive education and enforcement, and a dramatic drop in drink drive rates during this time, over 70,000 people are still caught drink driving annually.

The latest statistics released by the Department for Transport (DfT) actually show an increase in drink drive fatalities on British roads in 2016 of 18 per cent compared to the previous year, with around 230 people being killed in accidents where at least one of the drivers or riders involved was over the drink drive limit.

What are the legal limits?

In England and Wales, the alcohol limit for drivers is 80 milligrams (mg) of alcohol per 100 millilitres (ml) of blood, 35 micrograms per 100ml of breath or 107mg per 100ml of urine. This is the highest in Europe.

The alcohol limit for drivers in Scotland is lower than elsewhere in the UK at 50mg of alcohol in every 100ml of blood (matching the limit in most other European countries) and 22 micrograms of alcohol per 100ml of breath. There was a 12.5% decrease in drink drive offences in the first nine months of the reduced limit.

“More than **half a million** drivers are stopped and breathalysed each year by the police.”

What are the penalties?

Drink driving

Anyone caught over the legal alcohol limit when driving or attempting to drive will be banned from driving for at least 12 months, or three years if convicted twice in 10 years, face an unlimited fine and up to six months' imprisonment.

All these factors – the length of imprisonment, period of disqualification, size of fine and related penalty points - depend on the severity of the offence.

In charge of a vehicle

Being in charge of a vehicle whilst over the legal limit or unfit through drink could result in three months' imprisonment plus a fine of up to £2,500 and a possible driving ban.

Failure to provide a specimen

The penalty for refusing to provide a specimen of breath, blood or urine for analysis is a maximum of six months' imprisonment, an unlimited fine and a driving ban of at least 12 months.

Death by careless driving

If the worst should happen, causing death by careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs carries a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine and a minimum two year driving ban. There is also a requirement to pass an extended driving test before the offender is able to drive legally again.

An endorsement for a drink driving offence remains on a driving licence for 11 years.

A conviction for drink driving also means:



Your car insurance costs will increase significantly



If you drive for work, your employer will see your conviction on your licence



You may have trouble travelling to countries like the USA

How many units can I drink before driving?



The legal drink drive limit cannot be safely converted into a certain number of units, as it depends on a number of factors to include gender, body mass and how quickly your body absorbs alcohol into the blood stream.

The only way to ensure that you are under the limit is to not drink any alcohol.

What constitutes a unit of alcohol?

One unit of alcohol is 10ml (1cl) by volume or 8g by weight, of pure alcohol.

How many units are there in a drink?

A unit of alcohol is measured by the size (ml) and strength (% alcohol by volume or ABV) of the drink. The following is a guideline:



Wine

Small Glass (125ml)

12% - 1.5 units

14% - 1.75 units

Standard Glass (175ml)

12% - 2.1 Units

14% - 2.45 Units



Beer

Half Pint

3% - 1 Unit

4% - 1.1 Units

5% - 1.4 Units

330 ml Bottle

3% - 1 Unit

4% - 1.1 Units

5% - 1.7 Units

1 Pint

3% - 2 Units

4% - 2.2 Units

5% - 2.8 Units



Spirits

Single Shot (25ml)

40% - 1 Unit

Double Shot (50 ml)

40% - 2 Units

Port 20% - single shot is 0.5 Unit; double shot is 1 Unit

How long do the effects of alcohol take to wear off?

On average it takes one hour for a healthy liver to process one unit of alcohol. However, it does depend on your body mass, gender and how much food you have consumed.

Even if you feel fine after drinking heavily in the evening, there is still a high possibility that you will be above the legal limit should you drive the following morning.

Almost 1 in 5 of the 70,000 drivers convicted of drink driving each year are on their way to or at work next day.



**1 hour to process
1 unit of alcohol**

Practical advice

They may seem obvious but here are our top tips on how to enjoy socialising without the drink driving pitfalls.

- If you are going out for the evening with friends, arrange within your group who is going to be the designated driver. This person should abstain from drinking alcohol for the night so they can drive the rest of the group home safely.
- If you live near to good public transport links, take advantage of them. If you're planning on staying out beyond the last train, tube or bus, make sure you have the phone number for a local taxi firm.
- Mobile apps such as mytaxi and Uber make booking a taxi easier than ever.
- If you have no option but to drive, stick to soft drinks, or choose from the growing range of zero alcohol beers, wines and fruit-based 'mocktails'.

Drugs and driving: the law

Government guidelines say that it is illegal to drive if either:

- you're unfit to do so because you're on legal or illegal drugs
- you have certain levels of illegal drugs in your blood (even if they haven't affected your driving)



Legal drugs are prescription or over-the-counter medicines. If you're taking them and not sure if you should drive, talk to your doctor, pharmacist or healthcare professional.

The police can stop you and make you do a 'field impairment assessment' if they think you're on drugs. This is a series of tests, such as asking you to walk in a straight line. They can also use a roadside drug kit to screen for cannabis and cocaine.

If they think you're unfit to drive because of taking drugs, you'll be arrested and will have to take a blood or urine test at a police station. You could be charged with a crime if the test shows you've taken drugs.

Last year, following the introduction of new screening equipment and roadside tests by the police, there was a seven-fold increase in the UK in the number of drivers being convicted for drug driving.

What are the penalties?

The latest changes to drug driving laws, first introduced in 2015, make it illegal to drive with certain drugs in the body – eight illegal drugs and nine prescription drugs - above specified limits.

If caught and convicted, drivers face:

- a minimum 1-year driving ban
- an unlimited fine
- up to 6 months in prison
- a criminal record

Your driving licence will also show you've been convicted for drug driving. This will last for 11 years.

Dangers of everyday drugs

However, some drugs are found in every day remedies for colds and flu or in anti-depressants. These include common everyday remedies such as codeine and co-codamol and painkillers such as tramadol.

As a result, company drivers could inadvertently be putting themselves at risk of prosecution if they drive with certain levels of these drugs in their body. The limits are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/drug-driving#table-of-drugs-and-limits>

What are the drugs involved?

The Government website <https://www.gov.uk/drug-driving-law> shows nine drugs, some of which are available over the counter, which could cause problems:

- amphetamine
- clonazepam
- diazepam
- flunitrazepam
- lorazepam
- methadone
- morphine or opiate and opioid-based drugs, such as codeine, tramadol or fentanyl
- oxazepam
- temazepam



Government advice is that you should talk to your doctor about whether you are fit enough to drive if you've been prescribed any of the above drugs.

For additional driving guides and information visit www.clm.co.uk

Safe driving!