

## Drinking Responsibly?

Anyone that has seen or heard an ad for beer, wine or liquor has heard the tag line "If you drink, drink responsibly". To drink responsibly sounds like an unattainable feat; don't many people have a drink to relax and escape their responsibilities for a bit? When looked at more closely though, this statement refers more to drinking in a way that is safe for the drinker and those around them. There are two very effective ways to accomplish this: designated drivers and monitoring and limiting your alcohol intake.

A designated driver or DD is someone that agrees not to drink any alcohol and will be responsible for driving those that did drink home as safely as possible. It is estimated that designated drivers have saved close to 50,000 lives and spared many more thousands from injuries associated with drunk driving. The designated driver helps friends avoid embarrassment, fines and jail time while keeping their drivers' licenses and avoiding injury and possible death.

Unfortunately, many times the designated driver is the object of teasing by the very people they're trying to help. This is unfortunate because the designated driver approach prevents someone driving under any level of impairment because the driver has agreed to drink no alcohol. It makes the decision of who should drive very easy, not one of determining which has had the least to drink or is the least impaired. The non-drinker should actually have a respected role in a group because they are doing their part to get everyone home safe.

The position of designated driver can also be helpful for someone who chooses not to drink. The non-drinker is not a "party pooper" but a means to keep friends safe during a night of drinking. The main benefit of the designated driver concept is that it is easy to understand, doesn't cost a penny and is very effective.

When planning to use a designated driver the following tips can be quite helpful: Plan ahead- when there will be socializing with alcohol, it's easiest to figure out ahead of time who the designated driver will be. This way there will be no confusion after arriving at the party or event who should and should not be drinking. Take turns- it can be a real drag having to always be the designated driver. This plan works best if everyone in the group takes a turn, this way no one person will feel obligated to take on the responsibility.

However this isn't always a fool-proof method. Sometimes the designated driver "forgets" their position or there just isn't a designated driver available and you have to drive yourself home. If you must drive after drinking don't allow yourself to get drunk in the first place. There are many guidelines to help you have a good time at a gathering and still stay sober and get yourself home safely.

- Alcohol is alcohol. The contents of a bottle or can of beer, a glass of wine or shot of hard alcohol all have the same amounts of pure alcohol and will have the same effect on your body and your Blood Alcohol Content (BAC).

- Know your limit. Know how much alcohol you can safely handle and not get drunk. A good general guideline for most individuals is to limit drinking to one alcohol drink (beer, wine or hard liquor) per hour.
- Eat food while you drink. Food will help to slow the absorption of alcohol into your body. Foods high in protein (meat, cheese, peanuts) are especially helpful.
- Sip the drink. The faster you drink the drink, the faster the alcohol will be absorbed by your body, so SLOW DOWN!
- Don't participate in chugging contests or drinking games. Again, the faster you drink the faster you'll get drunk and lose the ability to slow yourself down.
- Get a drink only when you really want one. If someone is nagging you to get a drink, ask for a non-alcohol beverage. If this doesn't work, accept the drink and then "lose" it by setting it down and walking away.
- Skip a drink. Alternate a non-alcohol drink with each alcohol drink you have. This will help to slow down your consumption.
- Keep active. Sitting and drinking can be very dangerous to keeping sober. If you stay active; play darts, horseshoes or dance, you tend to drink less and be more aware of the effects of what you have drank are having on you.
- Beware of unfamiliar drinks. Some drinks, like zombies, brain erasers, Long Island Ice Teas, can be deceiving about how much alcohol they contain. If the alcohol is difficult to detect in the drink, it will be difficult to space them out properly.

If these tips fail and you find yourself drunk and without a designated driver, do the smart and responsible thing: call someone to come and get you or just call a cab. It is better to get home safe than risk injury to yourself and others.

*For additional help with safety and OSHA compliance, take advantage of the resources available through NCMA. These resources include the NCMA Block Plant Safety Software. The software is available from NCMA at (703) 713-1900 at a cost of \$150 for up to 3 plants/year (nonmember \$450).*