

NSW Alcohol Interlock Program

Information sheet for patients before entering program

Your alcohol interlock device is designed to stop you driving when you have alcohol in your body, for your safety and the safety of all road users.

You are required to have a zero blood alcohol concentration when driving with an interlock

This means that you can't drink any alcohol before driving. You also have to be careful that alcohol from the day or night before has left your body.

How long does it take alcohol to leave your body?

On average it takes at least one hour for your body to clear one small alcoholic drink. For some people it can take longer. That is, at least one hour to clear a middy of beer, or a small (100ml) glass of wine, or a standard nip of spirits.

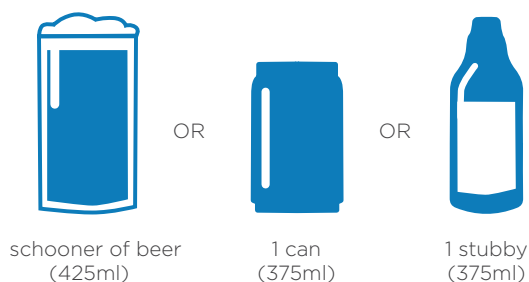
Each of these standard drinks takes at least one hour to clear:



There is no way to speed up the rate your body breaks down alcohol. The only thing that sobers you up is time.

People very often drink from larger glasses or containers, and as a result the alcohol takes even longer to clear. For example, an average glass of wine poured at home is 180ml, and this takes nearly two hours to clear.

Each of these 1.5 standard drinks takes at least 1.5 hours to clear:



Remember: Everyone is different

The time it takes for alcohol to clear can vary from person to person. Some people will have a higher blood alcohol concentration for the same number of drinks, and the alcohol may also take longer to clear, for example:

- If you drink quickly
- If you drink on an empty stomach
- If you drink while taking certain medicines
- If you have less muscle bulk
- If you are female.

Some people clear alcohol more slowly, for example people with medical conditions such as liver disease.

The safest option is to avoid drinking any alcohol before driving.

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When you have a few drinks in a row, alcohol takes longer to clear

The level of alcohol in your blood can keep rising because your body may not clear one drink before the next drink is consumed. So if you have a few drinks, it can take several hours for the alcohol to clear.

Could alcohol from the day or night before still be in your body?

It is common for alcohol from the day or night before to still be in your body the next morning. For very heavy drinkers, it can take more than 24 hours for alcohol to leave the body.

For example:

- If someone has eight cans of beer in the evening, this can take around 12 hours to clear
- If someone drinks a case of beer one day, this can take more than 30 hours to clear

Many people are booked for drink driving the next day. The safest way to avoid this is to not drink at all or strictly limit your drinks in the evening, if you intend to drive the next day.

How can I avoid 'false positive' results?

Be careful to avoid using mouthwashes that contain alcohol in the 15 minutes before you drive. The alcohol left in your mouth may cause a positive reading. Your interlock service provider may also have advice about other foods or products to avoid, as part of your interlock training. You can also discuss this with your interlock service provider or your doctor.