

Strategies for Keeping a Drunk Friend From Driving Home

Thirty-nine percent of all traffic fatalities in the United States are alcohol related. In spite of this fact, drunk driving, particularly around the holidays continues to plague our nation. You can help...

When sober and thinking rationally, nearly everyone agrees that no one should ever drive while impaired. The problem is that the decisions about whether or not to drive are often made by holiday revelers after they have had too much to drink. Alcohol, like all drugs of abuse, fools the brain by creating a false sense of confidence and control. Studies show that even occasional drinkers routinely overestimate their ability to drive and perform complex motor functions. Unfortunately, this poor judgment costs thousands of lives each year.

What can you do to prevent drunk driving

- **If you or your friends are going out and plan to use alcohol, decide in advance who will be the designated driver.** Agree in advance that drinking and driving is not an option.
- **If you are hosting a party where alcohol is served, collect car keys from your friends who drink.** That way, when they are ready to leave, they must get a second opinion on whether they're sober enough to drive home.
- **Make your guest feel as comfortable choosing a nonalcoholic beverage as he would choosing alcohol.** You can do this by presenting nonalcoholic drinks in a prominent, easily accessible place and by asking them what they would like to drink instead of pointing them to the bar or handing them an alcoholic drink when they arrive.
- **Always serve food with alcohol.** High-protein and carbohydrate foods like cheese and meats are best because they stay in the stomach longer, thus slowing the rate at which the body absorbs alcohol.
- **Stop serving alcohol about two hours before the party is over.** Guests then have time for their bodies to metabolize the alcohol.

When the party's over

If one of your guests has had too much to drink, you cannot let him drive because he could hurt or even kill himself or others. This can be a difficult situation and may even cause a scene. Don't worry; chances are your friend will thank you later.

Try these suggestions

- **Be proactive.** If you notice that a guest is impaired, try to make arrangements to get her home before the party ends.
- **Stay calm.** Don't argue or shout. If your intoxicated guest becomes belligerent, change the subject or distract him. This will buy you some time to come up with another approach. You don't want him storming away mad, especially with his car keys in hand.
- **Call a family member or friend to come and get him**—preferably before the party ends.
- **Suggest that you or a sober friend drive him home** and you will arrange to get his car back to him the next day.
- **Offer to let the impaired guest stay overnight.** This may sound inconvenient, but you could be saving a life.
- **Arrange for a taxi and, if necessary, pay the fare.** It's hard to object to a free ride.
- **If all else fails tell him you will call the police if he tries to drive.** It's far better than calling the ambulance.

Remember that drunk driving kills thousands of people per year. Don't let this happen to someone you know.