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IMPAIRED DRIVING (A SAMPLE SAFETY TALK)

Alcohol is a drug! It is one of many known as central nervous system (CNS) depressants. Included in this category are such drugs as barbiturates and tranquilizers (Valium, Xanax, etc.). Alcohol acts on the central nervous system in exactly the same way as these other drugs. It slows us down!

Question: What is stronger: A mixed drink, a beer, or a glass of wine?

Answer: All have just about the same amount of alcohol! Let's figure it out!

- Beer: 12 ounces at 5% alcohol = 0.6 (six tenths) ounce alcohol
- Wine: 5 ounces at 12% alcohol = 0.6 ounce alcohol
- Whisky, Vodka, Gin, etc.: 1.5 ounces (a "shot") at 40% alcohol = 0.6 ounce alcohol

Alcohol basically affects four of the abilities we need most while driving.

Question: What do you think they are?

Answer:

- Judgment
- Alertness/Attention
- Vision
- Reaction Time

Let's take each one individually.

Question: When judgment is affected, how can it influence our driving?

Answer: Misjudge:

- Speed
- Distance
- Our Skill
- Other Traffic
- Need for using safety belt

Question: When our alertness is affected, how can it influence our driving?

Answer: Reduced awareness of:

- Conditions (e.g. light, road, weather, traffic)
- Other Traffic
- Road Conditions (e.g. type of road - 2 lane or 4 lane, curbs, surface, traction)
- Things going on around us (pedestrians, traffic signals, etc.)

Question: When our vision is affected, how can it influence our driving?

Answer: We're unable to perceive hazards quickly enough to prevent a collision!



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Question: How can increased reaction time affect our driving?

Answer: It takes longer to stop! Many of us have been locked into the idea of "drunk driving". We feel our alcohol concentration must be high (.08%) in order to be under the influence of alcohol. In reality, alcohol does not sneak up and hit us on the head at .08%. All of these effects begin with our first drink. Think about it. One drink makes us a less capable driver than no drinks!



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