BAC to Basics

What is BAC? Blood alcohol concentration (BAC) is the percentage of alcohol in the blood.

The Golden Zone

In the golden zone, when BAC is low, a person experiences benefits like increased relaxation and sociability.

Judgment and decision-making become impaired at a BAC of 0.05 and higher, increasing the risk of negative outcomes. At a BAC of 0.08 and higher, a person is legally intoxicated and is at higher risk of more serious negative outcomes.

Tips for Managing BAC

• **Face and space**
  Sip a drink instead of chugging, alternate with water or soda, and have no more than one drink per hour. On average, it takes nearly three hours for the alcohol in two standard drinks to leave the body.

• **Eat before and while drinking**
  Alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream more slowly when there is food (especially protein) in the stomach.

• **Avoid mixing alcohol with other drugs**
  Some over-the-counter and prescription drugs (e.g. antihistamines and narcotics) can increase alcohol’s effects. Caffeine and other stimulants can make a person feel less impaired, increasing the risk of making dangerous choices.

• **Use caution when sick or tired**
  When a person is sleep deprived or ill, alcohol leaves the body more slowly.

• **Be aware of new environments**
  Alcohol can cause greater impairment when drinking in new locations or when trying new drinks. (Weird, but true!)

Resources for Support

Whether choosing to drink or not, there are communities at UVA to support you.

Gordie Center for Substance Abuse Prevention  
[Link](https://gordiecenter.virginia.edu)

• **Subscribe to the Hoos Sober listerv** for weekly activities that are not alcohol-based.

• **Learn from the ADAPT peer educators.**

• **Assess and reduce personal alcohol risk with the confidential BASICS program.**

• **Connect with Hoos in Recovery, a social support network with free food.**

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)  
(434) 243-5550

One-on-one support and referrals, plus a support group for concerns about substance use.

Questions or concerns? Talk to your RA!

Estimating BAC

These charts help estimate BAC when drinking. Alcohol is absorbed differently in different people, and actual BAC will depend on many factors, like sleep, illness, and other substance use.

Why two different charts? Females and males absorb and metabolize alcohol at different rates, even if they are the same weight. These charts correspond to sex assigned at birth.

UVa Students Who Drink Use Protective Behaviors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hoo Knew?</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hoos eat before drinking</td>
<td>95.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoos avoid mixing alcohol with other drugs</td>
<td>83.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoos avoid drinking when sick or tired</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoos keep track of how many drinks they have</td>
<td>77.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoos make plans to get home safely or use a designated driver</td>
<td>88.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*From the Spring 2015 Health Survey with responses from 931 UVA students

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4. **Use caution when sick or tired**
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