

## Levels of Alcohol Impairment

For purposes of law enforcement, blood alcohol content (BAC) is used to define intoxication and provides a rough measure of impairment. As Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) increases, so does impairment.

Below is a table showing the levels of impairment:

<p><b>Level 1: Mild Impairment – 0.0 - 0.05%</b> (<i>0.05% is the South African legal limit</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mild speech, memory, attention, coordination, balance impairments</li> <li>• Perceived beneficial effects, such as relaxation</li> <li>• Sleepiness can begin</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 2: Increased Impairment – 0.06 - 0.15%</b> (<i>0.08% is the UK legal limit</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived beneficial effects of alcohol, such as relaxation, give way to increasing intoxication</li> <li>• Increased risk of aggression in some people</li> <li>• Speech, memory, attention, coordination, balance further impaired</li> <li>• Significant impairments in all driving skills</li> <li>• Increased risk of injury to self and others</li> <li>• Moderate memory impairments</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 3: Severe Impairment – 0.16 - 0.30%</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech, memory, coordination, attention, reaction time, balance significantly impaired</li> <li>• All driving-related skills dangerously impaired</li> <li>• Judgement and decision making dangerously impaired</li> <li>• Blackouts (amnesia)</li> <li>• Vomiting and other signs of alcohol poisoning common</li> <li>• Loss of consciousness</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 4: Life Threatening – 0.31 - 0.45%</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of consciousness</li> <li>• Danger of life-threatening alcohol poisoning</li> <li>• Significant risk of death in most drinkers due to suppression of vital life functions</li> </ul>

Source: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/magazine/issues/spring14/articles/spring14pg23.html>

**Note: Lack of sleep also causes impaired functioning...**

If you go 12 consecutive nights on six hours' sleep, it's equivalent to a blood alcohol of 0.1%, (level 2) which is marked by slurred speech, poor balance, and impaired memory. In other words, you're functioning as if you are drunk.

The performance of someone who has been awake for 24 hours is equivalent to that associated with a blood alcohol level 25% more than the current UK legal limit of 0.8% (level 2). This makes them 7 times more likely to have an accident.