Section Two  Being in Shape to Ride

Riding a motorcycle demands your full attention. Responsible riders pay attention to the riding environment, identify potential hazards, look for escape routes and make good decisions.

Alcohol, Other Drugs and Riding

Alcohol is a major contributor to motorcycle crashes, particularly fatal crashes. Studies show that nearly 40 percent of all riders killed in motorcycle crashes had been drinking. Riding “under the influence” of alcohol or other drugs poses physical and legal hazards for every rider. By becoming knowledgeable about the effects of alcohol and other drugs, you will see that riding and alcohol don’t mix.

Effects of Alcohol and Other Impairing Drugs

Alcohol and other drugs impair your:

- **Judgment** – Alcohol and other impairing drugs affect those areas of your brain that control judgment. You may not be able to make good decisions about the traffic conditions or how you can protect yourself.
- **Vision** – Alcohol and certain types of drugs can blur your vision, slow your ability to focus and cause double vision.
- **Reaction Time** – Alcohol and other impairing drugs slow your ability to process information and impacts your ability to react quickly to a situation.

How Alcohol Works

Unlike other beverages, alcohol is absorbed quickly and can be measured within 30 to 70 minutes after a person has had a drink.

A typical alcoholic drink equals about half an ounce of alcohol.

This Section Covers

- Alcohol, Other Drugs and Riding
- Health
- Emotions

Riding under the influence of alcohol or other drugs poses physical and legal hazards for every rider.
This is the approximate amount of alcohol found in:

- One shot of distilled spirits, or
- One 5-ounce glass of wine, or
- One 12-ounce beer.

**What Affects My Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC)?**

BAC refers to the amount of alcohol contained in a person’s blood. In all states, an adult with a BAC of 0.08 percent or above is considered intoxicated. However, impairment begins with the first drink. Even under 0.08 you can be impaired and convicted for riding impaired. How fast a person’s BAC rises varies with a number of factors:

- The number of drinks. The more you drink, the higher the BAC.
- How fast you drink. When alcohol is consumed quickly, you will reach a higher BAC than when it is consumed over a longer period of time.
- Your sex. Women generally have less water and more body fat per pound of body weight than men. Alcohol does not go into fat cells as easily as other cells, so more alcohol remains in the blood of women.
- Your weight. The more you weigh, the more water is present in your body. This water dilutes the alcohol and lowers the BAC.
- Food in your stomach. Absorption will be slowed if you’ve had something to eat.

**Don’t Drink or Don’t Ride**

The safest and most responsible choice is to not drink and ride. Because once you start, your judgment is affected and your ability to say “no” gets weaker.

If you plan on drinking, leave your motorcycle at home and find other transportation so you won’t be tempted to ride impaired. Or, call ahead to where you plan on drinking and ask if there is a secure place for you to store your motorcycle overnight so you can find an alternative way home – such as a taxi or designated driver.

There are no shortcuts to removing the alcohol from your body fast. None of the “remedies” you may have heard about – cold showers, hot coffee or physical exercise – will make you remove the alcohol faster. The only proven remedy to removing the alcohol is time. Remember – your body can process about one drink an hour.

**Other Impairing Drugs and Riding**

All drugs may affect your ability to ride safely. This is true of many prescription, over-the-counter and illegal drugs. If you are not sure if it is safe to take a drug and ride, ask your doctor or pharmacist about any side effects. Never drink alcohol while you are taking other drugs. These drugs could multiply the effects of alcohol or have additional effects of their own. These effects not only reduce your ability to operate your motorcycle, but could cause serious health problems, even death.

**Health**

There are many health conditions that can affect your riding, even little problems. Check with your doctor if a health condition could interfere with you operating a motorcycle.

**Emotions**

Emotions can interfere with your ability to think, can create mental distractions, increase risk-taking, create a lack of attention and can interrupt the ability to process information. You may not be able to give all your attention to operating a motorcycle if you are overly worried, excited, afraid, angry or depressed.
Test Your Knowledge

1. If you have only one drink before riding:
   A. You cannot be arrested for drinking and riding.
   B. Your riding skills will not be affected.
   C. It can affect your ability to operate a motorcycle.

2. What percent BAC is considered intoxicated?
   A. 0.02 percent.
   B. 0.04 percent.
   C. 0.08 percent.

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2. C – page 16, What Affects My Blood Alcohol Concentration?
QUICK TIPS: The Importance of Riding Unimpaired by Alcohol or Other Drugs

Theory: Alcohol And Motorcycles Are Incompatible

- At a BAC* of 0.01 to 0.04%, judgment begins to lessen, the drinker is less critical of their own actions, reaction time is slowed, and indications of mental relaxation may appear.
- At a BAC of 0.05 to 0.07%, judgment is not sound, thinking and reasoning powers are not clear, and the ability to perform complex skills is lessened.
- At a BAC of 0.08% or above, judgment and reasoning powers are severely hampered, and the individual cannot complete common simple tasks without error.

Proof: Statistics From Recent Studies (by NHTSA, Florida, Kentucky, and Australia)

- Having any alcohol in one’s body increases the chance of crashing by five times.
- Having a BAC greater than 0.05% increases the risk of crashing about forty-fold.
- 46 percent of all motorcyclists killed in crashes were using alcohol.
- One fourth of all fatal alcohol-related motorcycle crashes involve motorcyclists running off the road, overturning, or falling from the motorcycle rather than striking another object.

Explanation: Alcohol Affects Your Ability To “SEE”

SEE\textsuperscript{sm} is the acronym for MSF’s strategy to help motorcycle riders maintain a safety margin as well as remain ready and able to respond properly to traffic situations. SEE stands for:

- Search for hazards that might lead to trouble.
- Evaluate how the hazards might interact to create risk; prioritize multiple hazards to deal with one at a time.
- Execute an action to maintain a margin of safety.

Alcohol affects these three human elements of safe motorcycle operation by impairing your vision (Search), judgment/decision-making ability (Evaluate), and coordination/reaction time (Execute).

Recommendation: Plan Ahead

- Riders should never mix alcohol with riding. Even low, legal limits of BAC increase your risk while riding a motorcycle.
- Riders who are away from home and decide to drink should either (1) wait until their BAC has returned to zero before riding, even if it means staying overnight, or (2) leave the motorcycle in a secure location and find alternate transportation home.

*BAC = Blood Alcohol Concentration