

EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL ON DRIVING PERFORMANCE

Impairment of the most important driving skills can occur at very low blood alcohol concentrations. Even one or two drinks can be enough to seriously affect driving safety.

- ⇒ The brain has less control of the eyes, resulting in a narrower visual field and less scanning of the periphery. Alcohol also delays the pupils' ability to adjust to changes in lighting (e.g., the glare of oncoming headlights).
- ⇒ Alcohol impairs the process of interpreting complex sensory information. This slows the rate of information processing by the brain, so drivers look at fewer sources of information and acquire less total information per unit of time.
- ⇒ The ability to divide attention between two or more sources of visual information is compromised after drinking alcohol. Impaired drivers will favour one task over another, with possibly disastrous results.
- ⇒ The ability to steer is related to physical coordination, which is adversely affected by alcohol.

All of these effects of alcohol on driving ability may be compounded by the natural processes of aging and/or medical conditions. It is very important to be aware of how your health affects your ability to drive safely.