

Did You Know?

One pint can take hours to leave your body.

Alcohol doesn't just disappear when you stop drinking. It takes time for your body to break it down — and that time can affect judgement, reaction time and safety, even the next day.

How Long Does Alcohol Stay in Your Body?

Facts, figures and what it means for your safety.

How your body processes alcohol

Your body breaks down alcohol slowly, mainly in the liver. On average, it processes around one UK unit per hour. This is only an average and can vary between people.

Examples: pints and other drinks

Drink	Approx. units	Approx. time*
Pint lager (3.6%)	2 units	2+ hours
Pint lager (5.2%)	3 units	3+ hours
3 pints lager (5.2%)	9 units	9+ hours
6 pints lager (5.2%)	18 units	18+ hours
Large wine (250 ml, 12%)	3 units	3+ hours
Single spirit (25 ml, 40%)	1 unit	1+ hour

THIS IS NOT A COUNTDOWN TO WHEN YOU CAN DRIVE.

There is no reliable calculation that can tell you when it is safe to drive. You may still be affected the following morning. If there is any doubt, don't drive.

Things to remember

- Your body processes about one unit per hour on average.
- This varies from person to person.
- Food, water, coffee, exercise, a cold shower or sleep do not make alcohol leave your body faster.
- You can still be affected the next day, even if you feel fine.
- Feeling sober is not proof that all alcohol has left your body.

Common myths — the facts

“Coffee sobers you up.”

False. It may make you feel more alert, but it does not remove alcohol.

“A cold shower helps.”

False. It does not speed alcohol breakdown.

“Sleep it off.”

Sleep doesn't make your liver process alcohol faster.

“Water gets rid of it.”

Water may help dehydration but does not clear alcohol faster.

Why this matters

- Alcohol can affect judgement, reaction time and coordination.
- You may still be over the legal drink-drive limit hours after your last drink.
- Six 5.2% pints are about 18 units — illustrating why drinking can carry into the next day.
- Plan transport before drinking and never rely on how sober you feel.

Need support?

If you are concerned about your own or someone else's drinking, speak to your GP or a local alcohol support service. Physical dependence can make sudden withdrawal dangerous, so medical advice may be needed.

Sources: NHS alcohol units • GOV.UK drink-drive guidance • THINK! | [Space to Breathe Therapy](#)