

Blood Alcohol Level (BAL) and the bodies responses

BAL = .02%-.03%

You feel mildly relaxed and maybe a little lightheaded. Your inhibitions are slightly loosened, and whatever mood you were in before you started drinking may be mildly intensified.

BAL = .05%-.06%

You feel warm and relaxed. If you're the shy type when you're sober, you lose your feelings of shyness. Your behavior may become exaggerated, making you talk louder or faster or act bolder than usual. Emotions are intensified, so your good moods are better and your bad moods are worse. You may also feel a mild sense of euphoria.

BAL = .08%-.09%

You believe you're functioning better than you actually are. At this level, you may start to slur your speech. Your sense of balance is probably off, and your motor skills are starting to become impaired. Your ability to see and hear clearly is diminished. Your judgment is being affected, so it's difficult for you to decide whether or not to continue drinking. Your ability to evaluate sexual situations is impaired.

BAL = .10%-.12%

At this level, you feel euphoric, but you lack coordination and balance. Your motor skills are markedly impaired, as are your judgment and memory. You probably don't remember how many drinks you've had. Your emotions are exaggerated, and some people become loud, aggressive, or belligerent. If you're a guy, you may have trouble getting an erection when your BAL is this high.

BAL = .14%-.17%

Your euphoric feelings may give way to unpleasant feelings. You have difficulty talking, walking, or even standing. Your judgment and perception are severely impaired. You may become more aggressive, and there is an increased risk of accidentally injuring yourself or others. This is the point when you may experience a blackout.

BAL = .20%

You feel confused, dazed, or otherwise disoriented. You need help to stand up or walk. If you hurt yourself at this point, you probably won't realize it because you won't feel pain. If you are aware you've injured yourself, chances are you won't do anything about it. At this point you may experience nausea and/or start vomiting (keep in mind that for some people, a lower blood alcohol level than .20% may cause vomiting). Your gag reflex is impaired, so you could choke if you do throw up. Since blackouts are likely at this level, you may not remember any of this.

BAL = .25%

All mental, physical, and sensory functions are severely impaired. You're emotionally numb. There's an increased risk of asphyxiation from choking on vomit and of seriously injuring yourself by falling or other accidents.

BAL = .30%

You're in a stupor. You have little comprehension of where you are. You may suddenly pass out at this point and be difficult to awaken. (But don't kid yourself: Passing out can also occur at lower BALs. But, at lower blood alcohol levels, you may decide you've had enough to drink and go "pass out." With an alarming BAL like .30%, your body will be deciding to pass out for you.) In February 1996, an 18-year-old student died of alcohol poisoning with a BAL of .31% after attending two parties the night before.

BAL = .35%

This blood alcohol level also happens to be the level of surgical anesthesia. You may stop breathing at this point. In February 1996, a second student, age 20, died of alcohol poisoning with a BAL of .34% after drinking six beers and twelve shots in two hours.

BAL = .40%

You are probably in a coma. The nerve centers controlling your heartbeat and respiration are slowing down. Death may be imminent. In April 1994, a 21-year-old student died of alcohol poisoning with a BAL of .40% after a Hell Night Party.