

## MY FRIEND PASSED OUT DRUNK, WHAT DO I DO? HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR INTOXICATED FRIEND

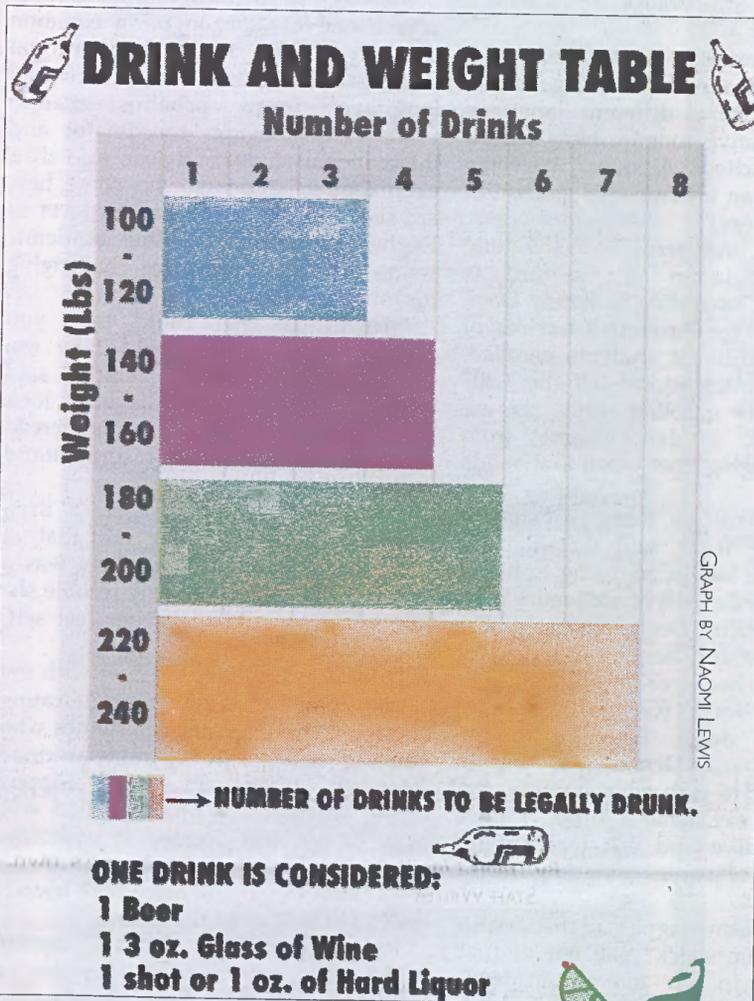


By Casey Horgan  
STAFF WRITER

Most of us have, at some point in our lives, had to take care of a friend who has had too much to drink. In most cases, giving the friend several glasses of water and having them lie down is good enough. However, there are times when "good enough" ... is not.

If a friend is noticeably intoxicated — slurring words at an increasingly high volume, tripping over nonexistent items and having deep conversations with inanimate objects, perhaps — the first step is to get them to stop drinking. This is easier said than done, as drunk people tend to get very attached to their beverages. For some, this is the extent of assistance you need to provide. But if your friend starts to get that frantic look on their face and stumbles to the nearest receptacle (potted plant, toilet, you name it), be prepared to spend the remainder of your evening with them.

There are several things to keep in mind when dealing with intoxicated friends. Much of this has been adapted from FactsOnTap.org.



### STEPS TO TAKE WHEN YOUR FRIEND...

**IS VOMITING:** Try to keep the person sitting up. If they insist on lying down, make sure they lie on their side. Do not leave them alone.

**HAS PASSED OUT:** Try to wake them. If you are unable to, put the person on their side and call 911 and then Public Safety.

**HAS A FEVER, CHILLS, OR COLD/PALE/BLUISH SKIN, OR IF THEY ARE VERY SWEATY:** Call a doctor, describe these symptoms, and get advice on what to do. This can be done anonymously.

**IS BECOMING VIOLENT:** Notify the party's host or a bouncer at the bar. Call the police if the behavior is especially volatile.

**IS HAVING DIFFICULTY BREATHING:** If the person is not breathing normally or if they stop breathing, call 911. Anything under 12 breaths a minute is considered abnormal and points to alcohol poisoning.

**IS INJURED:** Call 911 for an ambulance, or take your friend to the emergency room yourself. They might not feel pain and tell you they do not require medical assistance. Don't believe them. Unsurprisingly, drunk people don't always know what is best for them. Insist that they see a doctor.



**SEEMS PARANOID, CONFUSED, DISORIENTED OR UNBALANCED:** Take them home and make sure they do not drink any more alcohol. Try to keep your friend awake and calm.

INFORMATION FROM FACTSONTAP.ORG



### Myths about Sobering up:

**"You're supposed to give a drunk person food, water or any kind of medicine to sober them up."**

What? No. Well, yes, you're supposed to give them water and food, but this is tricky. Anything in the mouth of a semiconscious person can cause vomiting, choking or inability to breathe. Unless the person is capable of feeding themselves or drinking a glass of water, do not make them. As for giving them anything you find in your medicine cabinet ... not a good idea. Alcohol amplifies the effect of medication. Some over-the-counter medicines can put you at risk for harmful reactions. Ibuprofen has the potential to cause bleeding and ulcers, liver damage or an abnormally rapid heartbeat.

**"People pass out from drinking all the time. It's nothing to worry about. I'll cause more problems by trying to get help."**

False. When a person passes out from drinking, it's because their body is physically incapable of tolerating the amount of alcohol put into their system. Alcohol is a depressant that slows down your heart rate, lowers your blood pressure and slows your breathing. Once your brain has been depressed enough by the alcohol, you pass out. The amount of alcohol it takes to make you pass out is dangerously close to the amount of alcohol it takes to make you dead, so yes — worry about it. A judicial penalty is a lot better than death.

**"The best thing to do for someone who is drunk is to put them to bed and let them sleep it off."**

Sort of. Although this is partly true, the fact is that a drunk person is helpless and must be cared for. Under no circumstances are you to leave a very drunk person alone. Stay with them, check their breathing, check their skin temperature and frequently wake them.

**"Drunk people are funny and make great jokes. Also, they're really easy to provoke. Fair game."**

Please, no. Alcohol can make a person feel invincible. Egging on a drunk person could cause them to do something stupid or dangerous. It might seem funny at the time, but it won't be when you're the one taking them to the emergency room. And even minor provocation can cause a happy drunk to become an upset or violent one.

**"Putting a drunk person in a cold shower helps them sober up."**

Don't do it. The shock of the cold could cause them to become unconscious, which is the opposite of sobering them up.

**"They'll be fine to drive. It's only a few blocks."**

This needs no explanation.

IMAGES BY JOY DAMON

**DO**

- Ask them to drink lots of water
- Have them sit down
- If they want to go to sleep, have them lie on their side
- Take their keys
- Have them eat bread if they can feed themselves

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**DO NOT**

- Let them fall asleep on their stomach or back
- Force them to drink or eat
- Be bossy, argue
- Grab their drink away
- Leave them

### WILL I GET IN TROUBLE IF:

I am drunk, and I call for assistance for my friend?  
 I am underage and drunk, calling for assistance for my friend?  
 I am under the influence of drugs, calling for assistance for my friend?

No. If you are calling because you are worried about the safety of your friend, no formal judicial record will be reported in your name. You might have to have a meeting with a counselor to discuss the event, but your record will not be charged. Your friend, on the other hand, is subject to standard consequences.

"The student caller does not usually get (documented), but the drunk student definitely gets (documented), and depending on his/her judicial history, the consequences differ."  
 --Delphine Uwase, Resident Advisor in Mary Hobbs