

# Great tips

- Don't serve alcohol before planned physical activities, like swimming, skiing, snowmobiling, boating or skating. The more people drink, the worse their co-ordination and judgment become, and the more likely they are to injure themselves or others. If you plan to serve alcohol, do so after guests have finished their physical activities.
- Try to prevent guests from becoming intoxicated. Stop serving alcohol or discourage guests from drinking well before the party is scheduled to end. Make sure that you have enough food and alcohol-free drinks available for later in the party.
- Make sure that a guest who has had too much alcohol gets home safely. As a host, be prepared to ask for a guest's car keys or invite your guest to stay overnight. Know your designated drivers. Are they sober? Have cash and phone numbers ready for taxis.
- Be prepared to call the police for help if a guest is obviously intoxicated and insists on driving or if the party is getting out of hand.
- Make sure your insurance will cover any claim that may be made against you arising from events on your property. If needed, buy extra insurance for the specific event. Make sure you understand any circumstances in which your insurance will not provide coverage.

## As a host,

you want to enjoy your event or party. Plan ahead and use these tips to prevent problems, reduce risk and still have a great time!

*Legal assistance provided by Robert Solomon, Professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of Western Ontario and Director of Legal Policy for MADD Canada.*

This information is provided for educational purposes only. Please consult a lawyer to deal with specific incidents.



# HAVING A Party?

## GREAT TIPS TO LOWER YOUR RISKS AS A HOST

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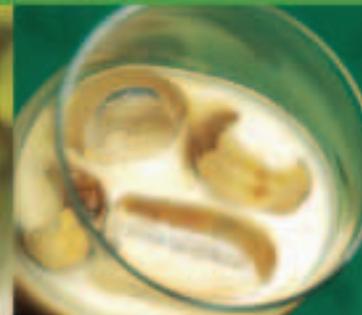
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*As a social host,* you don't have the same legal responsibilities as someone who runs a bar or tavern. But that's not the whole story. If you allow an alcohol-related event to be held on your property, if you host an alcohol-related event on or off your property, or if you provide the alcohol to others, you may have more legal responsibilities than you thought.

Most people know that it's not wise to serve alcohol to someone who is obviously drunk. But many aren't aware that they may be sued and held liable (legally responsible) when they provide alcohol to guests who are intoxicated and who injure themselves or others—either at the event or on the way home. (Providing alcohol involves serving, giving or making alcohol available.)

Social hosts who continue to provide alcohol to a guest who is obviously intoxicated, and who they know will drive, may be held liable for any injuries resulting from a crash. Even if you don't provide any alcohol, you may still be liable for alcohol-related injuries that occur on your property or on other property under your control. (Property under your control could, for example, be a party at a hall you have rented out or a party you hosted in your home.)

However, in the 2006 Zoe Childs case, the Supreme Court of Canada found that social hosts who merely provided the venue for an adult BYOB event (where guests bring their own alcohol and serve themselves) had no legal responsibility when a guest who was intoxicated left and caused a crash.

You are more likely to be held legally responsible when underage youth are involved. As a general rule, you must be at least 19 years old to drink alcohol in Ontario. If you allow an underage BYOB event to be held on your property, you may be held liable for injuries suffered or caused by a guest who is intoxicated. This is true whether the injuries occurred at the event or after the guest leaves. The courts are likely to be even more critical of your actions if you bought or provided the alcohol for the underage event.

If an alcohol-related injury results from any of the following situations, you could be liable:

- You host a party in your home and provide alcohol to a guest who is obviously intoxicated, and who you know is planning to drive.
- You organize an alcohol-related function, such as a wedding in a rented hall, and fail to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of your guests while they are on the property.
- You organize a company party at which alcohol is provided to employees and guests who are intoxicated.
- You sign a Special Occasion Permit for an event (for example, a licensed street party or dance party), and fail to ensure that the alcohol is served responsibly; the venue meets fire, building and other legal requirements; the event is properly managed; and staff and security are adequately trained.
- You knowingly permit your underage child to host a drinking party in your home or elsewhere on your property.

*As a host,* it's important to be aware of your guests' drinking. Guests can be significantly impaired even if they don't "look drunk." For example, they may be impaired without slurring their words or being unusually loud.

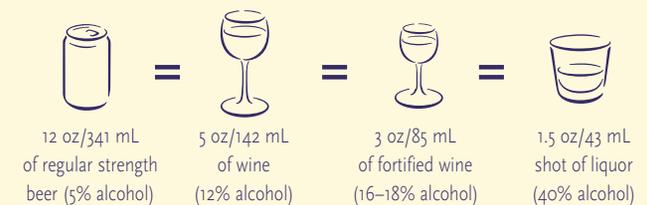
Since injuries from falls, fights and vehicle crashes increase when someone drinks too much alcohol, planning ahead and serving alcohol responsibly will give you a better chance of keeping your guests and other people in your community safe. It will also reduce your risk of being sued.



## Great tips

### TO KEEP GUESTS SAFE AND REDUCE YOUR RISK AS A HOST

- Drink moderately or don't drink at all. The more you drink, the more difficult it will be for you to identify and resolve potential problems. You will have greater control when you have not been drinking and can think clearly and act quickly if needed.
- Serve alcohol instead of having an open bar. Some people may drink more if they are given unlimited access to free alcohol.
- If you are serving alcohol, offer regular-sized, standard drinks or drinks that are smaller than a standard size. Each of these standard drinks contains 13.6 grams of pure alcohol.



Note: Higher alcohol beers and coolers have more alcohol than one standard drink.

- Avoid serving doubles or shooters. Don't encourage your guests to drink alcohol or rush to refill their glasses. Don't permit drinking games or contests. Never offer guests "one for the road" right before they leave the party or event.
- Serve food throughout the event. Eating while drinking is better than drinking on an empty stomach, as food slows down the speed at which the body absorbs the alcohol. Offer veggies, cheeses and light dips. Avoid providing salty, sweet or greasy foods, as they tend to make people thirstier.
- Offer low-alcohol and alcohol-free cocktails and other drinks, including water, when you serve alcohol. You can find great recipes for non-alcoholic drinks on the Internet.
- Decide in advance how you will deal with guests who drink too much. Before the party begins, ask friends to be non-drinking helpers.