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Simple Sobriety Tests For Home Use

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These tests can easily be done by anyone. They are based on the same tests used by police to determine intoxication. Absolutely no prior training or experience is required. They are as easy to instruct, as they are to perform. When someone is impaired though, they are equally easy to fail. By administering these tests, you can detect moderate to heavy impairment. See the end of this document for tips on detecting light impairment.

Many parents doubt themselves after they determine that a child has failed one of these tests. You can lessen this doubt by trying the tests out on both yourself, and your child, while you are both completely sober. There will be no difficulty. Remember how easy they are, because the signs of impairment may seem subtle to you when there are actual consequences hanging in the balance.

How accurate are they? The One Leg Stand test has been repeatedly researched, and found to correctly classify 83% of those who have a blood alcohol content above the legal limit to drive.

The ABC Test: Place your child on a flat surface, such as a kitchen floor. They can have sneakers on, but should remove any high-heels or clog-type footwear. Now explain the following instructions.

1. Stand straight up and place your feet side by side, so that they touch at the sides of the heels and toes.
2. Place your arms straight down along your sides, so that your hands rest flat against the sides of your legs.
3. Don't separate your feet or raise your hands off of your sides.
4. Now recite the alphabet, but start at the letter "F" and stop at the letter "O".

Watch for the following indications of intoxication:

- 1. Raises their hands/arms more than six inches off of their sides at least once.
- 2. Sways noticeably from back to front or side-to-side.
- 3. Starts on the wrong letter. Stops on the wrong letter. Skips a letter or repeats a letter.

If a person loses balance completely, and has to step out of the pose, or if they demonstrate **any two** of the indications listed above, you should suspect that they are impaired.

The Number Test: Place your child on a flat surface, such as a kitchen floor. They can have sneakers on, but should remove any high-heels or clog-type footwear. Now explain the following instructions.

1. Stand straight up and place your feet side by side, so that they touch at the sides of the heels and toes.
2. Place your arms straight down along your sides, so that your hands rest flat against the sides of your legs.
3. Don't separate your feet or raise your hands off of your sides.
4. Count backwards, out loud, from number "67" to number "53".

Watch for the following indications of intoxication:

- 1. Raises their hands/arms more than six inches off of their sides at least once.
- 2. Sways noticeably from back to front or side-to-side.
- 3. Starts on the wrong number. Stops on the wrong number. Skips a number or repeats a number.

The One Leg Stand Test: Place your child on a flat surface, such as a kitchen floor. They can have sneakers on, but should remove any high-heels or clog-type footwear. Now explain the following instructions.

1. Stand straight up and place your feet side by side, so that they touch at the sides of the heels and toes.
2. Place your arms straight down along your sides, so that your hands rest flat against the sides of your legs.
3. Don't raise your hands off of your sides, and DON'T MOVE UNTIL I TELL YOU TO.
4. When I tell you to, keep both of your legs straight, but lift one of them out in front of you so that you are holding your foot about six inches off of the ground.
5. After you raise your foot off of the ground, count out loud from "one" to "thirty", by stating "one-one-thousand, two-one-thousand, three-one-thousand..."
6. Don't lift your hands off of your sides, and don't touch your foot to the ground until you reach "thirty-one-thousand" (30 seconds).
7. You may begin now.

Watch for the following indications of intoxication:

- 1. Ignores your instructions, and begins the test too early.
- 2. Raises their hands/arms more than six inches off of their sides at least once.
- 3. Sways noticeably from back to front or side-to-side.
- 4. Touches their foot to the ground.
- 5. Misses a number, or continues counting beyond "thirty-one-thousand"

If a person loses balance completely, and has to step out of the pose, or if they demonstrate **any two** of the indications listed above, you should suspect that they are impaired.

The Romberg Balance Test: Place your child on a flat surface, such as a kitchen floor. They can have sneakers on, but should remove any high-heels or clog-type footwear. Now explain the following instructions.

1. Stand straight up and place your feet side by side, so that they touch at the sides of the heels and toes.
2. Place your arms straight down along your sides, so that your hands rest flat against the sides of your legs.
3. Don't separate your feet or raise your hands off of your sides.
4. Close your eyes and tilt your head backwards as if you were looking at the ceiling.
5. When I tell you to begin, I want you to silently estimate 30 seconds. After 30 seconds has passed, open your eyes and say "now".
6. (Prepare to time the thirty seconds yourself.) Begin now.

Watch for the following indications of impairment:

- 1. Raises their hands/arms more than six inches off of their sides at least once.
- 2. Sways noticeably from back to front or side-to-side.
- 3. Eyelid tremors, or other muscle shaking.
- 4. Estimates less than 26 seconds or more than 34 seconds.

If a person loses balance completely, and has to step out of the pose, or if they demonstrate any two of the indications listed above, you should suspect that they are impaired. In addition, a time estimation of less than 26 seconds would indicate the influence of a stimulant. An estimation of more than 34 seconds would indicate the influence of a depressant. Body tremors can be associated with some stimulants and hallucinogens.

The Lack of Convergence Test: Simply instruct your subject to follow your index finger with their eyes as you circle it in front of their face. After their eyes begin to follow your finger, you draw one more circle in the air. Then bring your finger in towards their face and stop it about two inches from the bridge of their nose. Hold it there for three seconds. In a normal subject, their eyes will converge on your finger and they will go cross-eyed. If they're actively under the influence of marijuana, inhalants, depressants or PCP, though, they will be unable to hold both eyes pointed inward.



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Important Notes:

These structured tests will give you the techniques you need to support or dispel your suspicions. If you administer the ABC or Number test routinely, you will need to change the point at which your subject starts and stops. (Performance improves with practice.) Also note that these tests will expose moderate to heavy impairment. It's important to remain vigilant for signs of light impairment. Substance abuse starts off in small quantities, and this may be your only chance of intervening before it becomes a life-threatening problem.

Subtle signs of drug use include: Odors on the hair, breath or clothes. An obvious attempt to conceal odors by using mouthwash, gum or body spray. A noticeable change in disposition. A lack of hygiene, or change of clothes from when they left. Missed curfew. Secretiveness, or acts of deception. A change in disposition. Red eyes or flushed cheeks etc..

Make sure you remove any gum or breath mints from your child's mouth prior to beginning the tests. Breath fresheners can mask the odor of alcohol for short periods of time. Once removed from the mouth though, any odor of beer or wine should return within 20 minutes. Vodka, many teen's drink of choice, will not have a powerful odor.

Once you develop suspicions of drug use, it is important for you to follow up with prompt confirmation. Many parents are surprised to learn that drug tests may only be effective if administered a few hours after the drug has been used. When dealing with the light use of experimental levels of drugs, trace evidence is expelled from the body relatively quickly. There are cheap and reliable home testing products that can reveal small amounts of drug use if used promptly. They are your best chance of detecting and intervening against substance abuse, before it's too late. (See www.mpoweredparent.com for more.)