

# TRUTHS VS. MYTHS

## Common Myths Regarding Ignition Interlock Devices

**1. *The ignition interlock device drained the battery.***

The device draws less than a quarter of an amp when not in operation and half an amp when it is preparing for a test. This is a minimal drain on the battery of a properly functioning vehicle electrical system. The device will not drain the battery to the point where it will not start unless the vehicle is not started for approximately 10 consecutive days. This period will be shorter if the electrical system is not functioning properly, such as poor alternator output, dead cells in the vehicle battery, or a vehicle battery that is several years old.

**2. *Spicy foods or Mexican foods cause the device to fail.***

Spicy foods, when mixed with HCL in the stomach, may create methane gas. While older alcohol detection technology might have registered a false positive from the methane, current technology is not susceptible to this phenomenon.

**3. *Cigarette smoke and snuff cause the device to fail.***

Clients are instructed to always take a few deep breaths before blowing into the unit if they are smokers. Cigarette smoke does not affect ethyl alcohol-specific units however, smoke should never be blown into any unit.

**4. *Gasoline at the service station causes the device to fail.***

Normal refueling at the gas station will NOT create a failure. Even in high concentrations, gasoline will not have a positive alcohol test on an ethyl alcohol-specific device.

**5. *Perfume, hairspray, after-shave, and cologne cause the device to fail.***

Most perfumes and colognes contain alcohol, but the device will not react to it in heavy concentrations.

**6. *Mouthwash/mouth spray causes the device to fail.***

Mouthwash and sprays usually contain up to 30% ethyl alcohol. If consumed immediately prior to a test, the ethyl alcohol in mouthwash can be detected and register a positive alcohol test. However, the alcohol concentration will dissipate within a few minutes since it is not in the bloodstream. Clients are instructed to rinse their mouths out with water before each and every test. Non-alcohol mouthwash is available and will not cause a positive alcohol test.

**7. *Chocolate mints, Altoids, Dentyne, and other gums cause the device to fail.***

Any consumables with ethyl alcohol may register on the device; however, the alcohol in consumables should dissipate in a few minutes. Most mints and gums have alcohol-free substitutes.

**8. *Cinnamon rolls and donuts make my unit fail.***

On extremely rare occasions, sugar and active yeast can combine to register a positive alcohol test. However, as with mouthwash, a second test will indicate a drop or a completely clean test. Rinsing the mouth with water after eating and before blowing into the device will eliminate a positive alcohol test. Clients should ALWAYS rinse their mouths with water before taking a test.

**9. *The unit just aborts and I can't start my vehicle.***

The majority of all aborts are caused by improperly blowing into the unit. If the aborting continues, the client should call the interlock provider's service center for advice.

**10. *My friend or girlfriend blew and was drinking.***

Most counties require cameras in the vehicle, and the driver can be identified if there is a positive test. If there is no camera in the vehicle, the clients are informed that they will be held responsible for all positive tests.

**14. *I can start my vehicle without taking a test.***

This can only be accomplished by a deliberate means of circumventing the device. This would be considered tampering and would be recorded by the device as a start violation.

**11. I don't have a car, or I just sold my car.**

Interlock devices should be installed on the vehicle most commonly driven by the client, even if they do not own the vehicle. However, they will have to get permission from the vehicle owner. If the client does not have a vehicle to install it on, an interlock device restriction should still be applied to the client's license, even if they do not get one installed. The client should also sign an affidavit that any vehicle they drive will be outfitted with an ignition interlock device. Finally, the judge can order a portable alcohol monitoring device if the defendant doesn't have a vehicle.

**12. My engine stopped due to the unit, OR what if it shuts the car down in a bad part of town?**

The device is designed to prevent the starting of a vehicle if a breath test is not passed. There is only one wire interrupted for the installation of the ignition interlock device, and it serves no other purpose than to send the signal to the starter for the vehicle to start once the test is passed. If the individual fails a test while driving, it simply records a violation; it does not shut the vehicle down.

**13. I only had one beer or glass of wine or one cocktail.**

If one drink is consumed one hour or more prior to startup, the average person will pass the test. Alcohol is normally metabolized at the rate of 1 ounce of alcohol per hour. It should be noted that weight, gender, and several other factors play a key role in determining the body's absorption and elimination of alcohol.

**15. What does anti-circumvention mean?**

This is a generic term for features designed to make tampering of the device more difficult. Some anti-circumvention features include voice tone, rolling retests, and the ability to detect power disconnects.

**16. The rolling retest is dangerous.**

The rolling retest is programmed to ask for a test within 5 to 15 minutes after the initial start-up of the vehicle and then randomly thereafter. Once the unit requests the test, the client has 6 minutes to respond. The test does not require eye contact with the device, and the 6 minutes allow adequate time to pull over if the client feels more comfortable doing so. **The ignition interlock provider should always instruct the client to pull over to take a test.**

**17. The device is not very accurate.**

All interlock devices must be certified to meet NHTSA specifications for accuracy and dependability and often by each State's requirements. When properly calibrated, the devices are accurate enough to determine the presence of ethyl alcohol and its concentration. The device cannot be used to determine if a client is "legally" intoxicated because the test is unsupervised. Some of the evidentiary breath testing equipment used by the police departments actually utilizes a fuel cell sensor as an additional means of verifying test results. Interlocks with fuel cell sensors are accurate.

**18. Anyone can blow into the device. I only have one car in our family.**

All family members must be trained to use the device however, the client is responsible for any "positives" and all readings registered on the monthly data logs. Yes, anyone can blow, but they must be able to pass a test, at a level determined by State requirements, and they must also submit to the rolling retests. Cameras will aid in determining if a positive reading was made by the client or a friend or family member.

**19. It costs too much.**

The unit costs approximately \$2.70 per day. The cost is at the expense of the client. Cigarettes cost \$6.00 or more per pack. Some research has shown, the average amount of money spent on alcohol per day by the client is \$16.00. Additional research has shown, they spend 30% of their monthly salary on alcohol.

**20. It is not 100% effective.**

Nothing is 100%. However, research shows a proven reduction in driving while intoxicated while the device is installed.

**21. Ignition interlocks cannot be installed on vehicles equipped with a push-button start or remote start.**

Interlock devices can be installed on vehicles equipped with push-button starts. However, clients should inform the tech before their appointment. Vehicles with remote start will have that feature disabled while the interlock is installed.

**22. I can't provide an adequate breath sample. I will always fail the tests.**

With proper documentation from a physician, vendors may adjust certain features, such as lowering the minimum breath volume, to accommodate special needs. If this is a concern, the client should speak with the vendor to explore options.