

## Stroke

A 20-year study of 6000 Scottish men, found those drinking more than the recommended weekly limit were more likely to die of a stroke (those consuming 5 units a day were **twice** as likely to do so compared with non-drinkers).

## High blood pressure

Drinking to excess is linked with a rise in blood pressure. Raised blood pressure increases the risk of heart disease and stroke.

## Fertility and pregnancy

Alcohol lowers sperm count in men and fertility in women. If you're pregnant or trying for a baby avoid alcohol completely.

## Sex

Alcohol numbs our sex organs and can make it hard to reach orgasm. It can also result in unsatisfying and unsafe sex.

Unsafe sex can lead to unplanned pregnancy and also sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and AIDS.

## Essential safety information

Never leave a drunk person on their own, especially if they appear sleepy.

Turn them onto their side (recovery position) so that if they're sick, they won't choke.

If you can't wake them and it is causing you great concern dial 999.

Keep them warm and stay with them until help arrives.



## Tips for sensible drinking

- **Stick to the sensible drinking guidelines**  
Find out why and what they are inside this leaflet.
- **Have a break**  
Aim to have at least 2 alcohol-free days every week to give your body a break.
- **Eat before and while you drink**  
Eat a good meal before you start drinking, or enjoy some snacks while you drink. This helps to slow down the effect of alcohol on your body.
- **Alternate alcohol with soft drinks or water**  
It will help you cut down the number of units you consume and avoid a hangover the next day.
- **Watch your measures**  
Drinks poured at home, at parties and in foreign bars are often larger than standard UK pub measures. Use a unit measure cup to keep track of how much you're pouring at home.
- **Know your strength**  
The strength of drinks varies dramatically depending on what you're drinking. So make sure you know how many units are in your drink, and keep tabs on your intake. Use the guide in this leaflet or look on the label – many brands state their unit content as well as their percentage strength.

- **Drop a glass size**  
Why not swap a large glass of wine for a smaller one or a pint of beer for a half and see the difference it makes to your weight, sleep, health and finances.
- **Change your drink**  
Not all brands are the same strength – try switching to a lower alcohol alternative. Make spirits into long drinks by adding mixers. Add soda water to wine or drink shandy instead of beer.
- **Keep a diary**  
Try keeping a drinking diary, noting how much you drank and where and you'll get a better idea of your alcohol intake.

## Worried about your own or someone else's drinking?

Call **DRINKLINE** free on **0800 7 314 314** at any time.

## Further information

For more tips and information about alcohol, visit [www.drinksmarter.org](http://www.drinksmarter.org)

Find out more about healthy living at [www.healthyliving.gov.uk](http://www.healthyliving.gov.uk)



# Alcohol & healthy living

Enjoy your drink...

but know what it could be doing to your body and your mind.



We all need at least 2 days a week without alcohol.



Make your night last longer, use soft-drink 'spacers' between alcoholic drinks.

## Alcohol


Alcohol is so widely used that we sometimes forget the harm it can cause to our physical and mental health.

So how can we enjoy our drink and stay healthy?

### What are the sensible drinking guidelines?

#### Sensible Drinking Guidelines

 **2-3**  
units daily

 **3-4**  
units daily

Women shouldn't regularly drink more than 2-3 units a day and men 3-4. Aim to have at least 2 alcohol-free days a week.

Avoid alcohol if pregnant or trying to conceive.

### What's a 'unit'?

A unit equals 10ml of pure alcohol. That's the amount an adult body can safely get rid of in an hour. Remember, the number of units in a drink vary dependent on size and alcohol content (% ABV).

### How many units in a drink?



**Single measure spirit**  
1 unit ABV 40% 25ml



**Alcopop**  
1.4 units ABV 5% 275ml



**Standard glass of wine**  
2.1 units ABV 12% 175ml



**Pint of lager**  
2.8 units ABV 5% 568ml



**Bottle of cider**  
1.4 units ABV 5% 275ml

Drink – it adds up to more than you think

**drinksmarter.org**

#### Sensible Drinking Guidelines

 **2-3**  
units daily

 **3-4**  
units daily

Aim to have at least 2 alcohol-free days a week.

The units above are **average** levels – the strength of drinks varies by brand.

### What happens when we drink more than the sensible drinking guidelines?

#### Weight gain

Alcoholic drinks contain more calories than you think. If you're concerned about weight gain you should consider cutting down your alcohol intake.

#### Dehydration

Alcohol dehydrates the body. This is partly what causes 'hangover' symptoms. If you've been drinking alcohol, drink plenty of water before going to bed.

#### Early ageing

Dehydration and lack of proper sleep wrecks skin and hair. It expands blood vessels, causing thread veins and other physical symptoms.

#### Sleep problems

It can help us nod off but even small amounts prevent the deep sleep that we need to feel alert and refreshed.

#### Cancer

Did you know that alcohol can be linked to seven types of cancer including mouth, throat, liver, bowel and breast cancer? After smoking, alcohol is the second biggest risk factor for cancers of the mouth and throat.

#### Liver disease

Alcohol turns some liver cells into fat and damages others. Repeated heavy drinking scars the liver ('liver cirrhosis') and causes permanent damage which can lead to death.

#### Mental health problems

Alcohol is a significant risk factor for poor mental health and mental illness.

People sometimes wrongly use alcohol as a way of coping with difficulties in their life.

Alcohol can cause and increase anxiety and depression. This is partly because it uses up our stores of the natural brain chemicals that calm us and lift our mood.

People who drink a lot have more problems with their mental health. Continued excessive drinking can cause memory loss and alcohol-related brain damage.

Try to adopt healthier ways to cope, like walking, playing sport, learning to relax and talking through your worries.