

## Alcohol and your period

Some women find alcohol affects them more during their period. This is because the rate alcohol is dealt with by the body can slow during this time. Heavy, prolonged drinking can result in irregular periods or stop them altogether (though you can still get pregnant).

## Pregnancy

Even small amounts of alcohol can harm the unborn child. Avoid alcohol if pregnant or trying to conceive.

## Breastfeeding

When breastfeeding, your baby consumes most of what you eat and drink – including alcohol.

If you choose to drink at all, keep to minimal amounts, no more than 1-2 units a week, and try to have it after the last feed of the day so it doesn't affect your baby. Or alternatively express some milk before you have a drink and feed this to your baby later.

## Mental wellbeing

Alcohol can make feelings of anxiety and depression worse and contribute to stress. Better ways to cope with life's challenges include learning problem solving and relaxation techniques, taking regular exercise and sharing worries with someone you trust.

## Breast cancer

In Scotland, around 1,000 people each year are admitted to hospital with breast cancer linked to their alcohol consumption. A woman's risk of breast cancer increases from drinking as little as 1-2 units a day. Every unit drunk has been found to increase the risk of breast cancer by 7-11%.



## Liver disease

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

In 2010, 409 women in Scotland died because of alcohol. 321 of them (78%) were caused by alcoholic liver disease.

## Personal safety

Alcohol lowers inhibitions and can make us more likely to get into risky situations. Being drunk makes us more vulnerable to accidents and physical and sexual assault. Keep an eye on each other when you're out and don't let anyone walk home alone, or with a stranger. Make sure you get home safely.

## Coping with someone else's drinking

A heavy drinker can make the whole family unhappy and leave you angry, scared, confused, guilty and unable to cope.

If the person is prone to be violent towards you, you must seek help. Before confronting them, talk it through with someone else first and always consider your own safety.

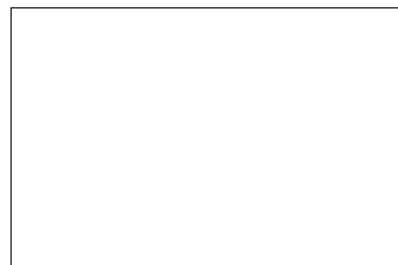
For advice, call the **Domestic Abuse Helpline 0800 027 1234**.

## 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.drinksarter.org](http://www.drinksarter.org)



# Women and Alcohol

What every woman needs to know.



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



Every drink we have adds up, and over time it can have a bigger impact on our health and wellbeing than we realise. That's why it's important to stick to the sensible drinking guidelines.

## Booze nation

As a nation we've been steadily drinking more and more over the last 50 years with 38% of women now exceeding daily and/ or weekly limits in a typical week. The trouble is, the more we drink as a nation, the more harm we do to ourselves, our families, our communities and Scotland as a whole.

## So what's the problem?

### Women are more at risk from alcohol

Women's bodies react to alcohol in a different way to men's. Women have on average 10% more fat than men, which means there's less body fluid to dilute alcohol, so it travels around women's bodies in more concentrated form and causes more harm. Women's livers produce less of the substance the body uses to break alcohol down (an enzyme called alcohol dehydrogenase). This means not only do




women get drunk quicker but the effects last longer too. Which is why the sensible drinking guidelines for women and men are different.

## 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 the 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 may vary by brand.

## Alcohol and weight gain

There are almost 200 calories in a large glass of red wine. At 7 calories per gram, alcohol contains more calories than many foods. Sugar in drinks comes on top of that. Alcohol can stimulate the appetite too, so you're more likely to eat more.

## Contraception

The contraceptive pill can slow the rate alcohol gets into the bloodstream so you won't get drunk as fast. This doesn't mean you can ignore **sensible drinking guidelines**. Heavy use can make the pill less effective. If in doubt, ask your doctor for details. Having sex while drunk makes us more vulnerable to unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

## Fertility

Alcohol lowers sperm count in men and fertility in women. The best advice is, if you want to conceive, avoid alcohol completely.