A BIG NIGHT OUT?

How much do you know about what you’re drinking?
Alcohol is measured in **units** and different drinks have a different alcohol content. So it's not just the **amount** you drink that will affect you, but also the number of units of alcohol you consume.

Alcohol is absorbed into your **bloodstream** within a few minutes and is carried to all parts of your body including your brain. Stronger drinks like spirits and **fizzy** drinks such as sparkling cider or champagne are absorbed more quickly.

The **effects** of alcohol on your **body** depends on many factors including how much you have drunk and your **size and weight**. Because women are generally smaller and lighter than men, alcohol will **affect** them to a greater extent.

National guidelines suggest that men should drink no more than 3-4 units of alcohol a day and women should drink no more than 2-3 units a day.
BY KNOWING WHAT’S IN YOUR FAVOURITE DRINK, YOU’LL BE BETTER ABLE TO DRINK WITHIN YOUR LIMITS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drink</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary strength lager (3.5-4%)</td>
<td>pint</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premium strength lager (5%)</td>
<td>pint</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary strength cider (6%)</td>
<td>pint</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red/white wine (12%)</td>
<td>standard glass (175ml)</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red/white wine (12%)</td>
<td>large glass (250ml)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcopops (5%)</td>
<td>bottle (275ml)</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gin, vodka, rum &amp; whisky</td>
<td>single (35ml)</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gin, vodka, rum &amp; whisky</td>
<td>double (70ml)</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PREGNANCY

If you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant, the best advice is to steer clear of alcohol. When a pregnant woman drinks, alcohol passes directly to the baby through the placenta. Drinking alcohol in pregnancy can impair the development of the unborn child.
A BIG NIGHT OUT

On a big night out, it is easy to drink twice or even three times the recommended daily allowance. If you drink a lot most weekends and you usually get drunk, then you are probably a binge drinker.

Until recently, the main health concern around drunkenness was the risk of accidents. Alcohol can blur your vision, lead to a loss of balance and make your movements clumsy. It also affects your reaction times.

There is now evidence to suggest that drinking large amounts over a short period is far worse for your health than spreading the same alcohol consumption over a week. Large amounts of alcohol drunk in one session can put a strain on your liver and other parts of the body. Repeated instances of binge drinking have been linked to strokes, kidney damage, memory loss and an increased risk of breast cancer in women.
TRY THE FOLLOWING TIPS TO REDUCE THE AMOUNT YOU DRINK DURING AN EVENING

- Avoid strong brands
- Try alternating alcoholic drinks with soft ones
- Avoid rounds, or skip some rounds by drinking more slowly
- Drink smaller drinks – have a half, a small glass or a single instead
- Use more mixers to dilute the alcohol and make your drink last longer
- Work out your limits and try to keep track of how many units of alcohol you’re drinking (you’ll be surprised)
- Avoid “top ups” which make it easy to lose track

Only time can remove alcohol from your bloodstream, black coffee, cold showers and fresh air won’t sober you up.

It takes a healthy liver about one hour to break down and remove one unit of alcohol. So, be aware that if you drink heavily the night before, you may still be over the legal drink drive limit if you drive the next morning.

After a binge, avoid alcohol for 48 hours to give your body time to recover.
Your Drinking Habits

Are drinking too much? Consider the reasons why you drink.

Are you drinking:
- to make yourself feel more confident and overcome shyness?
- to cope with or block out the stresses of life?
- to get drunk and do things you normally wouldn’t?
- because your social life revolves around drinking with your mates?
- because it has become a habit?

Try testing whether you can go for a night out without drinking. Stick to soft drinks and if you can still enjoy yourself, then don’t worry. But, if you feel tense or distressed, then you may have a problem. For help and advice talk to your G.P or use the contacts on the back of this booklet.

What type of drunk are you?
Alcohol loosens your inhibitions making you behave in a way you normally wouldn’t. It also affects your judgement leading you to make poor decisions. Because of this, it can get you into trouble.

Some people become aggressive, while others become reckless and out of control or “loved up” after a few drinks. If you have made mistakes in the past, try to get to know your limits and learn to stop drinking before you make a fool of yourself and do something you regret.
Alcohol has no nutritional value, but it’s high in calories, so if you’re watching your weight, it’s best to ease off the booze. Remember the stronger the drink, the more calories it contains.

While it may be tempting not to eat before going out, it’s important to have a meal before you drink. Drinking on an empty stomach increases the effects of the alcohol and means you will get drunk far more quickly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drink</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Approx. Calories</th>
<th>Approx. food equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary strength lager</td>
<td>pint</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>1 Cadbury’s Crème Egg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premium lager</td>
<td>pint</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>5 Chocolate Hob Nobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cider</td>
<td>pint</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1 Cadbury’s Crunchie bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red wine</td>
<td>175ml glass</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1 Chocolate Mini Roll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red wine</td>
<td>250ml glass</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>1 Cadbury’s Flake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White wine</td>
<td>175ml glass</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>1 bag of Malteasers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White wine</td>
<td>250ml glass</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>2 bourbon biscuits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcopops</td>
<td>275ml bottle</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1 Cadbury’s Crunchie bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gin, vodka, rum &amp; whisky</td>
<td>35ml shot</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1 Chocolate Digestive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you are drunk, you are at greater risk of being targeted for a sexual assault or robbery. While drink spiking is a concern, people often get into trouble because they are so drunk they are simply incapable of looking after themselves.

If you have a tendency to get wasted, ask a friend you can trust to keep an eye on you to make sure you don’t wander off with someone you don’t know or go home alone.

Sex
Alcohol has a habit of making people seem more attractive, clever and funny, so you’re more likely to get off with someone you don’t even fancy.

When you’ve had a few drinks, using a condom might not seem important, but without one you risk sexually transmitted diseases like Chlamydia, HIV or an unplanned pregnancy. If you think you might have sex, take some condoms out with you.

- Make sure you both agree to and want to have sex before you start. If you don’t have a firm yes before you sleep with someone, you could be charged with rape. If your partner doesn’t seem to know what they are doing, don’t have sex.
**Drugs**
Mixing alcohol with drugs is potentially lethal. The effects when taken together can be very different from when they are taken on their own and the results are always unpredictable. Just because you’ve had a good experience in the past, doesn’t mean your reaction will be the same again.

**Cocaine, Ecstasy and Amphetamine** - stimulant drugs like these taken with alcohol can cause a rise in blood pressure resulting in a risk of stroke and heart attack. Using alcohol and ecstasy can also lead to an increased risk of dehydration.

**Heroin, Ketamine & Tranquillisers (diazepam and temazepam)** - when these depressants are mixed with alcohol (which is also a depressant) they cause extreme drowsiness and it’s possible that you’ll fall into a deep sleep. If you’re then sick, there’s a real chance that you’ll choke on your vomit.

**GHB** - this can be fatal when mixed with alcohol.

Alcohol can also interact badly with prescribed medicines. If you’re taking any kind of medication, always check the label or speak to your pharmacist before drinking.