HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?
Did you know?
Alcohol affects men and women differently. Women have a proportionally higher ratio of fat to water than men, which makes them less able to dilute alcohol in the body.

Drinking. Every unit counts.
This booklet explains the effects of alcohol on your health and on your social, home and work life. It tells you the number of units in popular alcoholic drinks so you can keep tabs on what you’re drinking. And the back pages give useful advice and contact details if you want to cut down or get support.

Every unit counts
FRIDAY 5.30 PM
“Out of work and into the pub for a quick pint. The weekend starts here.”
Drinking and you

It's not unusual to want to take a little time out and have a drink or two. The problem with alcohol is that sometimes one drink can very easily lead to another. Before you know it, you might have drunk more than you intended. There are plenty of positive things about having a drink. It helps you unwind and relax and it's enjoyable to do with friends. But regularly drinking more than the recommended daily amount of units has its risks.

NHS advice on drinking recommends a maximum limit of 3-4 units of alcohol a day for men, 2-3 units a day for women and, for pregnant women, up to 1 to 2 units of alcohol once or twice a week.

You may want to keep track of what you drink in a day or an evening, and count your units. Be aware of the health and personal safety risks you face if you go over the NHS-recommended limit – this will help you make an informed choice as to how and when you drink.

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**MEN**

Daily limit

3-4 units

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**WOMEN**

Daily limit

2-3 units

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**PREGNANT WOMEN**

No more than 1-2 units, once or twice a week

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Tip: have something to eat before your first drink.
How drinking affects your health

Worried about whether drinking is damaging your health? More than one in four men and one in seven women drink more than the NHS regular recommended daily limits, at least on some days. Drinking like this regularly is risky to your health, but when asked, "how much do you drink?", many people actually underestimate how much alcohol they are drinking.

People who drink heavily are not necessarily 'addicted' to alcohol, but for many reasons they have got into the habit of consuming it regularly. This has short- and long-term risks.

**Short-term risks:**
- anxiety
- sexual difficulties such as impotence
- slowed breathing and heartbeat
- loss of consciousness
- accidents and injuries
- suffocation through choking on your own vomit
- potentially fatal poisoning.

Every unit counts

FRIDAY 7.00 PM
"I get home, and my partner is already cooking dinner. I’ll have a bottle of beer while I help.”
Long-term risks:
Drinking more than the recommended number of units regularly over a long period of time can lead to:
- certain types of cancer, especially breast cancer
- memory loss, brain damage or even dementia
- increased risk of heart disease and certain types of stroke
- liver disease, such as cirrhosis and liver cancer
- stomach ulcers.

As you get older, the risks are greater. Your body is less able to process alcohol, and, so you may find that the time it takes you to recover from a drinking session is longer than it was when you were younger. If you fall, you are more likely to seriously injure yourself too.

Did you know?
Alcohol is fattening. If you added three or four gin and tonics a day to your usual diet, you would put on 4lbs over four weeks.

Your looks may suffer if you drink too much. Not only is alcohol high in calories, making you put on weight, it has been linked to skin problems and signs of premature ageing too.

Choices
- don’t mix alcohol with any kind of medication as it can reduce the effect of the medication and increase harmful side-effects
- don’t mix alcohol with recreational drugs
- cut down to no more than 1-2 units once or twice a week (If you do not decide to stop altogether) if you are trying to conceive or are pregnant
- don’t drink if you have mental health problems, such as depression. It can make it worse
- don’t drink and drive or operate machinery.

Many problems triggered by drinking can get better if you stop or cut down.

Tip: if you have a pre-dinner drink and you are planning to drink later on, make this one a low (or no) alcohol one.
It's not only the health effects of drinking that you need to be aware of. Alcohol can also put you in unsafe or embarrassing situations because it can impair your judgement. If you've ever woken up one morning and regretted something you said or did the night before, chances are you'd had too much to drink.

If you are drunk you might put yourself at risk of having unprotected sex, or being mugged or of getting into fights – you could even end up being arrested or given an anti-social behaviour order. There is also a very strong link between alcohol and becoming a victim of sexual assault or violence.

At first, drinking makes you feel relaxed and happy. When drunk frequently, alcohol becomes a depressant. If you regularly drink more than the recommended limit, alcohol can affect your moods and behaviour. And that means it will also affect the people around you: your partner, your friends, your children and the people you work with.

Every unit counts

FRIDAY 8.30 PM
“Sit down to dinner and crack open a bottle of red. Have a couple of glasses each.”
Did you know?
If you have had a heavy drinking session, it is best to avoid alcohol for 48 hours to give your body time to recover.

At home
Plenty of jokes are made about alcohol affecting men’s sexual performance. Generally, they’re true. Alcohol can make men impotent. It can also put a heavy emotional strain on relationships – marriages in which alcohol is an issue are twice as likely to end in divorce. Alcohol is also a major factor in domestic violence.

Don’t forget that children learn about behaviour largely from their parents. How you drink may well affect how they drink too, both now and in the future. So try to set a good example by drinking in moderation.

At work
If you are feeling anxious or depressed because of the amount of alcohol you are drinking, your behaviour may affect the people you work with too. Taking time off work puts extra pressure on colleagues who have to cover while you’re away. It’s not the best way to further your career or build good working relationships.

Alcohol and children:
- It is illegal to give alcohol to a child under five, even at home
- It is illegal for anyone under 18 to buy – or be bought – alcohol, unless they are 16 or 17 and having a meal in a bar or restaurant
- If your child is curious about alcohol, try to talk about it naturally and make sure you have the facts
- If your child does drink, try and talk to him or her about it calmly. Don’t give a lecture or get angry.

Choices:
Don’t drink and...
- drive
- use any type of machine or equipment
- use a ladder or work at heights
- take part in any sports.

Tip: why not try using small (125ml) wine glasses instead of larger ones? 1 small glass is around 1 unit, a large glass can contain 3 units or more.

2.3 units per 175ml Red wine
1.0 units per 25ml Whisky