Drinking, you and your mates

HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

ALCOHOL
KNOW YOUR LIMITS
DID YOU KNOW?
Because of differences in biology, women can get drunk more quickly than men – and their daily limit is less.

DRINKING. EVERY UNIT COUNTS.

For many young people, drinking alcohol is a part of life. But how much do you know about how alcohol affects your body – both now and later on? How can you help reduce the risks to your personal safety when you drink? This leaflet will help you make choices about how much you drink. It tells you how alcohol can affect you, explains how you can stay safe when drinking and explains what to do if someone is in trouble after drinking too much. It’s not about stopping drinking. It’s more about making sure it plays a positive part in your day-to-day life.
A few drinks at the weekend. You and your mates are out in town, having a laugh – anything could happen. That might be closer to the truth than you think. If you drink more than the recommended maximum daily amount, you can’t be sure what the effects could be.

YOUR DRINKING CHOICES

Some people like to have a drink to relax at the start of an evening. Nobody’s saying you should give that up. But regularly drinking more than the maximum recommended amount of daily units or rapidly drinking too much in one go both have their risks.

The NHS recommends that you should not regularly drink more than:
3-4 units of alcohol a day for men,
2-3 units of alcohol per day for women.

If you drink more than this, the risks to your health and personal safety start to increase – especially if you regularly drink large amounts over a short period of time. But who drinks in units? To give you some idea, a 25ml shot of vodka is one unit, and an alcopop is 1.4 units. But things do vary. Some beers are stronger than others, wine comes in different strengths and shots can vary considerably in size. See pages 16-19 for information on the unit content of different drinks and try the quiz on page 15 to check what kind of drinker you are.
Drink Saturday night, Sleep it off Sunday morning. If drink was having a bad effect on your health, you’d feel it, wouldn’t you? Not necessarily. Heavy drinking affects you now and in the future. And you might not be able to tell right now what harm you’re doing. But, you can reduce the risks by knowing how many units you’re drinking and stopping when you reach your maximum daily limit.

**KNOW THE SIGNS**

When you’re on a big night out, it’s easy to forget that you might be putting a serious strain on your body. Any of these sound familiar?

- dizziness
- throwing up
- falling over
- headaches

It takes your liver an hour to process one unit of alcohol. So if you’re having two or three drinks an hour, you’re overloading your system and your health could suffer.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

You can’t save up your daily allowance and have it all in one go. If you do find you’ve overdone it, keep off the booze for 48 hours afterwards to give your body a chance to recover.
CHOICES
LOOK AFTER YOURSELF:
- eat before you go out
- drink water regularly and before you go to bed after a night out
- alternate alcoholic drinks with soft drinks or water
- don't try to keep up with friends who drink more than you
- try to avoid buying drinks in rounds
- if possible, sit down whilst you drink – you will drink less than you would standing up
- use more mixers – diluting a drink with another mixer will make it last longer and lessen the effects
- don't mix alcohol with drugs – especially ecstasy – it can be deadly
- if you're on medication, ask your doctor if it's okay to drink.

The effects of alcohol build up in your body over time. So if you regularly drink more than the recommended daily amount, you could be setting yourself up for long-term health problems.

PROBLEMS YOU CAN'T SEE...
- stomach ulcers
- sexual difficulties and impotence
- certain types of cancer, especially breast cancer
- memory loss and brain damage
- cirrhosis of the liver
- anxiety, stress, depression, poor concentration
- potentially fatal alcohol poisoning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beer pint</th>
<th>Lager pint</th>
<th>Cider pint</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.3 units</td>
<td>2.3 units</td>
<td>3.4 units</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
...AND PROBLEMS YOU CAN SEE

If the way you look is important to you, you might want to consider how alcohol affects your appearance. All alcohol is heavy with calories. So the more you drink, the more likely you are to put on weight and develop a beer belly. Heavy drinking can also take a toll on your looks, give you skin problems and age you before your time.

HOW’S YOUR DIET?

Having a kebab or a bag of chips after a few drinks is one thing, but you might be surprised at how many calories you get through just by drinking. For example, a small glass of wine has the same calories as a packet of crisps. A pint of cider contains the same calories as a large mince pie – something to think about at your next Christmas party!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drink</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Calories</th>
<th>Food equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White wine (175ml)</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>A bag of crisps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red wine (175ml)</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>A slice of cheese &amp; tomato pizza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lager or beer (pint)</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>A small sausage roll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cider (pint)</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>A mince pie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tequila (25ml)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>A doughnut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcopop (275ml)</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>A chicken drumstick</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The recommended daily calorie intake for women is 2,000 and for men is 2,500.

DID YOU KNOW?

Regularly drinking more than three single vodkas a day will push you over the recommended NHS limits. Although drinking more than three such drinks on a one-off session might leave you feeling happy and uninhibited, drinking to get drunk can be risky. A whole bottle of vodka could actually kill you.
WHO'S LOOKING AFTER YOU?

Ever been so drunk that you're not sure how you got home? Or woken up the morning after and regretted making a fool of yourself? Maybe you can't remember what you did. No matter how good a time you're having when you're drinking, it's important to put the health and safety of you and your friends first. Plan ahead and keep within NHS recommended limits. That way, you've got more of a chance of controlling what happens to you on a night out.

WHAT ARE THEY LAUGHING AT?
The more you drink, the easier it is to cross the line between being funny and being annoying. You might think that you're the life and soul of the party, but can you be sure everybody's laughing with you and not at you?

AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR
You might think you can control yourself, but you can't control how others behave when they're drunk. Young men are particularly vulnerable to violent attacks by other people who've been drinking.

DID YOU KNOW?
Around half of all violent crime is alcohol related.