Units and you

ALCOHOL
KNOW YOUR LIMITS

MEN 3-4 UNITS A DAY
WOMEN 2-3 UNITS A DAY

SHOULD NOT REGULARLY EXCEED
Every unit counts

This booklet explains the effect of alcohol on your health and on your social, home and work life. It tells you the number of units in different alcoholic drinks so you can keep tabs on what you’re drinking. It also gives useful advice and contact details if you want to cut down or get support.

Did you know that a double gin and tonic contains 2 units of alcohol? And that if women regularly exceed 2–3 units a day it could add up to a serious health problem?
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 that men should not regularly drink more than 3–4 units of alcohol a day and women should not regularly drink more than 2–3 units a day. 'Regularly' means drinking every day or most days of the week.

Pregnant women or women trying to conceive should avoid drinking alcohol. If they do choose to drink, to minimise the risk to the baby, they should not drink more than 1–2 units once or twice a week and should not get drunk.

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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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
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<tr>
<td>Should not regularly drink more than 3–4 units a day</td>
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How drinking affects your health

Did you know that if you regularly exceed your recommended daily alcohol limit, you increase the risk of having a stroke through high blood pressure?

Worried about whether drinking is damaging your health? Nearly one in three men and one in five women drink more than the NHS recommended regular daily limits of 2–3 units for women and 3–4 units for men. Drinking like this most days of the week is risky to your health, but when asked, ‘how much do you drink?’, many people actually underestimate how much alcohol they are drinking.

Most people who drink heavily are not necessarily ‘addicted’ to alcohol, but for many reasons they have got into the habit of consuming it regularly or in ‘binges’ of heavy drinking. Such drinking has long and short-term risks.
Short-term risks of heavy drinking:
- anxiety
- sexual difficulties such as temporary impotence
- slowed breathing and heartbeat
- loss of consciousness
- accidents and injuries
- suffocation through choking on your own vomit
- potentially fatal poisoning.

Long-term risks of heavy drinking:
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

The harmful effects of drinking too much when you’re young may not become obvious for several years. And as you get older, the risks to your health increase. Your body is less able to process alcohol, 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.

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.

Advice
- 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
- if you are pregnant or trying to conceive, you should stop drinking altogether. If you do drink, never have more than 1–2 units once or twice a week and do not get drunk
- be careful if you have mental health problems such as depression, as alcohol can make these worse
- don’t drink and drive or operate machinery.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sparkling wine</th>
<th>Wine</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>175ml glass</td>
<td>250ml glass</td>
<td>750ml bottle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 units</td>
<td>3 units</td>
<td>9.8 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABV 11%</td>
<td>ABV 12%</td>
<td>ABV 13%</td>
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How drinking affects those around you

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, of 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 but when drunk excessively alcohol can be a depressant, affecting your mood 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.

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 hungover, urinwell, anxious and depressed because of the amount of alcohol you are drinking, this may affect your work or the people you work with. 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.

Lager pint
2.8 units
ABV 5%

Beer pint
2.3 units
ABV 4%

Cider pint
3.4 units
ABV 6%
**Did you know** that if you regularly stay within your recommended daily alcohol limit, you’re more likely to look and feel in better shape?

**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 with someone aged 18 or over who can buy them beer, cider or wine during a table 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.

**Advice**
- Don’t drink and:
  - drive
  - use any type of machine or equipment
  - use a ladder or work at heights
  - take part in active physical sport.
Units. They

PINT CIDER: ABV 5.3%
3 UNITS

RED WINE (125ml): ABV 12.5%
1.6 UNITS

SAMBUCA SHOT: ABV 42%
1 UNIT

ALCOPOP: ABV 5%
1.4 UNITS

HALF PINT CIDER: ABV 5.3%
1.5 UNITS

SINGLE GIN & TONIC: ABV 40%
1 UNIT

CHAMPAGNE (175ml): ABV 11.5%
2 UNITS

DOUBLE WHISKY & COKE: ABV 40%
2 UNITS

HALF PINT LAGER: ABV 5.2%
1.5 UNITS
BOTTLE LAGER: ABV 5.2%  
1.7 UNITS

BOTTLE OF WINE: ABV 13.5%  
10 UNITS

WHITE WINE (175ml): ABV 13%  
2.3 UNITS

DOUBLE COGNAC: ABV 40%  
2 UNITS

PINT LAGER: ABV 5.2%  
3 UNITS

PIMMS: ABV 25%  
1.3 UNITS

COSMOPOLITAN COCKTAIL  
2 UNITS

DOUBLE WHISKY: ABV 40%  
2 UNITS

PINT BITTER: ABV 4%  
2.3 UNITS

all add up.