

Preventing Alcohol Misuse

Information and advice for patients/ parents and carers/
visitors/ mums-to-be/ new mums/ families

Alcohol Team

What is alcohol misuse?

Alcohol misuse means drinking excessively – more than 14 units of alcohol per week.

Every person coming into hospital is asked about their drinking. This is because regularly drinking more alcohol than the recommended 14 units per week can lead to long term health problems and can cause harm that you cannot see.

What causes alcohol misuse?

There are a number of reasons why a person may drink alcohol excessively, for example: to socialise with others, to cope with social pressures or to manage emotions. Although alcohol consumption is very common in the UK, it is actually a harmful substance.

There are a variety of options available to you dependent upon your needs, from brief advice to detoxification.

A member of the alcohol team can discuss this further with you.

What are the symptoms?

If you are regularly drinking more than 14 weekly units, you are at increased risk of certain cancers, liver cirrhosis, high blood pressure and stroke, plus numerous other conditions.

You may have already experienced problems such as:

- Poor sleep and low energy
- Feeling depressed
- Gaining weight
- Poor memory / concentration
- Behavioural issues (anger, irritability, argumentative)
- Sexual difficulties

Remember – the more you drink, the more likely you are to experience problems. You are almost definitely in worse physical shape than you would be if you did not drink.

What are the benefits of reducing or stopping drinking?

If you reduce or stop drinking you will:

- Have more free time and have more money;
- Have more energy and feel happier;
- Lose weight;
- Improve your health.

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How can the condition be prevented?

Know your Units

This is a guide to the amount of units in popular drinks.

Be aware that at home it is more difficult to keep track of units as you are likely to be much more generous than in pubs:

1 pint of strong beer / lager / cider (5.2%) = 3 units

1 pint of beer / lager / cider (4%) = 2.3 units

1 large glass of wine (13%) = 3.3 units

1 bottle wine (13%) = 10 units

1 double of spirits (40%) = 2 units

Medical Warning – if you have physical withdrawal symptoms (like sweating, sweating or feeling anxious until you have a drink) you may need medication to make it safe for you to stop drinking. Inform the nurse or doctor who will arrange a referral to the alcohol team. If you have left hospital you can contact the alcohol team for advice or speak to your GP. Do not stop drinking without seeking medical advice.

Contact details:

- Contact the Alcohol Team for advice on all alcohol related issues. Tel : 0121 507 5074 (Monday – Friday, 8.30 am – 4.30 pm)
- For Birmingham residents, CGL offer support and treatment. Tel: 0121 2275940, (www.changegrowlive.org/content/reach-out-recovery-birmingham)
- For Sandwell residents, Cranstoun offer support and treatment. Tel: 0121 553 1333, (www.cranstoun.org)

Further information

- **Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)** provide peer support. There are numerous meetings, Tel: 0800 9177 650 or visit www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/AA-Meetings/Find-a-Meeting for details.
- **Drinkline**, national free helpline, Tel: 0300 123 1110
- CGL and Cranstoun offer support for family members and friends affected by someone else's drinking. You can self-refer by phoning the numbers above.
- **Al-anon** offer peer support for family members and friends. There are numerous meetings, Tel: 020 7403 0888 or visit www.al-anonuk.org.uk/meetings for details.

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Sources used in this information leaflet:

- NHS, "Your drinking and You", accessed online https://www.alcohollearningcentre.org.uk/_assets/Change4Life/408723_Your_Drinking_And_You.pdf, 2012 (Accessed in January 2018)
- NHS, "Alcohol misuse", accessed online, <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/alcohol-misuse/>, 2015 (Accessed in January 2018)

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our websites www.swbh.nhs.uk, follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs.

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5303 or email: swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net



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