

Alcohol Advice

Information and advice for patients

Alcohol Care Team

The Facts

There are many myths about alcohol, so this leaflet will provide you with the facts and relevant advice you need when it comes to alcohol.

The recommended units of alcohol for men and women are 14, spread out across a number of days in the week with at least 3 alcohol free days. 14 units is equivalent to 35cl of spirits or approximately 6 pints normal strength lager.

Calculating units precisely can be difficult due to the varying strengths of wines, spirits, and lagers and if you are drinking at home, you may be a little more generous with your measures! Take a look at this guide below:

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

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

1 standard glass (175mls) of wine (13%) = 2.3 units

1 bottle wine (13%) = 10 units

1 double (50mls) of spirits

(40%) = 2 units

1 litre of spirits (40%) = 40 units

By regularly consuming more than 14 units of alcohol per week you increase the risk of developing certain health problems including cancer, liver cirrhosis, high blood pressure and stroke. There is also increasing evidence that regularly drinking harmful amounts of alcohol has a negative impact on mental wellbeing.

It is important to note that there is no safe level of drinking. The best approach for your health is to not drink at all, however cutting down your alcohol intake to 14 units or under per week (known as low-risk drinking) will reduce the potential impacts on your health. By reducing your intake, you may notice these benefits:

- Improved sleep quality
- More energy
- Improved concentration
- Saving more money
- Losing weight or increased ability to maintain a healthy weight
- Improved mood

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Binge Drinking

Binge drinking is defined as drinking heavily over a short space of time. Binge drinking is drinking more than 8 units for males and 6 units for females in a short period. Getting drunk can increase your risk of injuries as alcohol affects balance and co-ordination as well as long term health conditions such as alcohol related cancer and heart disease. Alcohol also affects your mood and memory and in the long term can lead to serious mental health problems.

Daily Drinking

If you drink 10 or more units per day, crave alcohol and experience withdrawal symptoms prior to your first drink you may have a physical dependence to alcohol. There are many signs of alcohol withdrawal including tremor, sweats, agitation, and increased heart rate. People who are severely dependent are at risk of seizures due to alcohol withdrawal. Should you experience any withdrawal symptoms, you are advised to continue drinking enough alcohol to treat symptoms but not enough to become intoxicated. It is vital to seek medical advice.

Reducing your intake can be a difficult challenge, however the following actions may assist you with this. Any reduction in alcohol intake will improve your health:

- Set yourself a realistic target. This may be something you want to achieve over a number of weeks. This could be done by completing a drink diary.
- Break the habit. Do some exercise like going for a walk; speak to your partner, a friend or relative. Do something you enjoy.
- Try non-alcoholic drinks.
- Assess the strength of the drink you consume, could you reduce to a lower strength alternative?
- Be the designated driver when socialising or having a drink with colleagues after work.
- Be honest with family and friends and ask them to support you.
- Recall the potential physical, mental, psychological, emotional, social, and financial benefits from reducing your intake.

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Support

If you think you are drinking too much and think you may need further advice, then there are a number of options to help you:

NHS: www.nhs.uk/livewell/alcohol

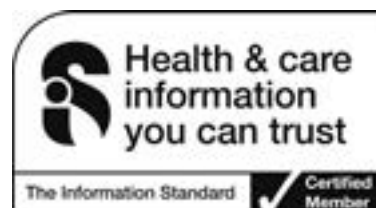
Drinkaware: www.drinkaware.co.uk

Alcoholics Anonymous: www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk Call: 0800 917 7650

CGL Birmingham: www.changegrowlive.org/birmingham Call: 0121 227 5890

Cranstoun Sandwell: <https://cranstoun.org/help-and-advice/alcohol-other-drugs/sandwell> Call: 0121 553 1333

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A Teaching Trust of The University of Birmingham
Incorporating City, Sandwell and Rowley Regis Hospitals
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ML7312

Issue Date: December 2023

Review Date: December 2026