

Alcohol problems

There is one unit of alcohol in:

- ½ pint of ordinary strength beer, lager or cider
- ¼ pint of extra strength beer, lager or cider
- 1 small glass of white (8 or 9% ABV) wine
- ⅔ small glass of red (11 or 12% ABV) wine
- 1 single measure of spirits (30 ml)

Common symptoms

'High-risk' drinking:

Men

More than three units alcohol/day
(21 units/week)

Women

More than two units alcohol/day
(14 units/week)



Many have no symptoms but are at risk

Psychological:

- ➔ Poor concentration
- ➔ Sleep problems
- ➔ Less able to think clearly
- ➔ Depression
- ➔ Anxiety/stress



- ➔ Difficulties and arguments with family/friends
- ➔ Difficulties performing at work/home
- ➔ Withdrawal from friends and social activities
- ➔ Legal problems.

Physical:

- ➔ Hangovers/blackouts
- ➔ Injuries
- ➔ Tiredness/lack of energy
- ➔ Weight gain
- ➔ Poor coordination
- ➔ High blood pressure
- ➔ Impotence
- ➔ Vomiting/nausea
- ➔ Gastritis/diarrhoea
- ➔ Liver disease
- ➔ Brain damage



Alcohol problems are treatable

Alcohol problems *do not* mean weakness

Alcohol problems *do not* mean you are a bad person

Alcohol problems *do* mean that you have a medical problem or a lifestyle problem.

What treatments can help?

Both therapies are most often needed:

Supportive therapy:

- ➔ to reduce drinking
- ➔ to stop drinking
- ➔ for stress
- ➔ for prevention of life problems
- ➔ for education of the family members for support.

Medication:

- ➔ for moderate to severe withdrawal
- ➔ for physical problems
- ➔ consider for relapse prevention.

Set goals: acceptable levels of drinking

Who?	How many drinks?	How often?
Men	No more than three units	Each day (only for five days/week)
Women	No more than two units	Each day (only for five days/week)

Have two non-alcohol drinking days/week.

Keep in mind: the less the person drinks, the better it is.

- ➔ Pregnancy
- ➔ Physical alcohol dependence
- ➔ Physical problems made worse by drinking
- ➔ Driving, biking
- ➔ Operating machinery
- ➔ Exercising (swimming, jogging, etc.)

➔ Recommendation is not to drink

Determine action: how to reach target levels

- ➔ Keep track of your alcohol consumption
- ➔ Turn to family and/or friends for support
- ➔ Have one or more non-alcoholic drinks before each drink
- ➔ Delay the time of day that you drink
- ➔ Take smaller sips
- ➔ Engage in alternative activities at times that you would normally drink (eg when you are feeling bored or stressed)
- ➔ Switch to low-alcoholic drinks
- ➔ Decide on non-drinking days (two days or more per week)
- ➔ Eat before starting to drink
- ➔ Join a support group
- ➔ Quench your thirst with non-alcoholic drinks
- ➔ Avoid or reduce time spent with heavy-drinking friends
- ➔ Avoid bars, cafés or former drinking places.

Review progress: are you keeping on track?

Questions to ask:

- ➔ Am I keeping to my goals?
- ➔ What are the difficult times?
- ➔ Am I losing motivation?
- ➔ Do I need more help?

Progress tips:

- ➔ Every week, record how much you drink over the week
- ➔ Avoid these difficult situations or plan activities to help you cope with them
- ➔ Think back to your original reasons for cutting down or stopping
- ➔ Come back for help, talk to family and friends.