

Mental health problems

Alcohol is a significant risk factor for poor mental health and mental illness.



People sometimes wrongly use alcohol as a way of coping with difficulties in their life.

Alcohol can cause and increase anxiety and depression. This is partly because it uses up our stores of the natural brain chemicals that calm us and lift our mood.

People who drink a lot have more problems with their mental health. Continued excessive drinking can cause memory loss and alcohol related brain damage.

Try to adopt healthier ways to cope, like walking, playing sport, learning to relax and talking through your worries.

Stroke

A 20 year study of 6000 Scottish men, found those drinking more than the recommended weekly limit were more likely to die of a stroke (those consuming 35 units a week were **twice** as likely to do so compared with non-drinkers).



Fertility and Pregnancy

Alcohol lowers sperm count in men and fertility in women. If you're pregnant or trying for a baby avoid alcohol completely.

Sex

Alcohol numbs our sex organs and can make it hard to reach orgasm. It also makes us clumsier and that can result in unsatisfying and unsafe sex.

Unsafe sex can lead to unplanned pregnancy and also sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and AIDS.

Blood Pressure

Drinking to excess is linked with a rise in blood pressure. Raised blood pressure increases the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Essential safety information

Never leave a drunk person on their own, especially if they appear sleepy.

Turn them onto their side (recovery position) so that if they're sick, they won't choke.

If you can't wake them and it is causing you great concern dial 999.

Keep them warm and stay with them until help arrives.



Tips for sensible drinking

■ Stick to sensible limits

Find out why and what they are inside this leaflet.

■ Eat before and while you drink

Food makes the body absorb alcohol more slowly so limits how quickly it gets into the bloodstream.

■ Use soft-drink 'spacers'

Alternate between alcoholic and soft drinks. That way you make your night last longer. It'll stop you getting dehydrated and lessen the effects of a hangover too.

■ Don't drink every day

Drinking too much alcohol damages the liver. It may repair itself but you have to give it a chance. Have at least two alcohol-free days every week.

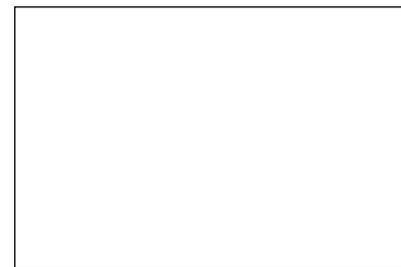
■ Check the strength, cut the quantity

Drink strengths vary widely between brands. Why not choose a lower alcohol option and consider cutting back?

Worried about your drinking?

Call **DRINKLINE** free on **0800 7 314 314** at any time.

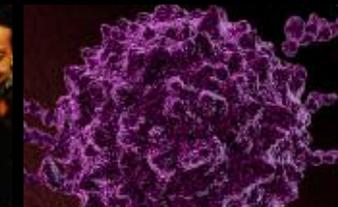
For more tips and information about alcohol, visit www.infoscotland.com/alcohol



Sensible drinking

Enjoy your drink...

but know what it could be doing to your body and your mind.



We all need at least 2 days a week without alcohol.



Make your night last longer, use soft-drink 'spacers' between alcoholic drinks.

Alcohol

Alcohol is so widely used that we sometimes forget the harm it can cause to our physical and mental health.

So how can we enjoy our drink and stay healthy?

Sensible limits

Men:

No more than 3-4 units a day and no more than 21 units in one week.

Women:

No more than 2-3 units a day and no more than 14 units a week.

We all need at least 2 days a week without alcohol.

Doctors agree that drinking more than the **sensible limit** damages health in the short and long-term.

Hang on! What's a unit?

A unit equals 10ml of pure alcohol. That's how much the body can safely get rid of in an hour.

How many units in a drink?

	330ml bottle standard lager/beer:	1.7 units
	700ml bottle whisky:	28 units
	275ml bottle alcopop:	1.5 units
	1 pint standard lager/beer:	2.3 units
	175ml glass standard size wine:	2.1 units
	1 pint strong cider:	3.4 units
	35ml measure gin/rum/vodka/whisky:	1.4 units
	1 pint medium strength lager/beer:	2.8 units

The units above are **average** levels – the strength of drinks varies by brand. Many display their unit content on the label to help you drink at a sensible level.

What happens to the alcohol we drink?

Some is absorbed in the stomach, most through the intestines. It then travels to all parts of the body in the blood including the brain.

It's the liver's job to get rid of the alcohol. When it becomes overworked by large quantities of alcohol it doesn't work so well.



What happens when we drink more than the sensible limit?

Weight gain

Alcoholic drinks contain more calories than you think. If you're concerned about weight gain you should consider cutting down your alcohol intake.

Dehydration

Alcohol dehydrates the body. This is partly what causes 'hangover' symptoms. If you've been drinking alcohol, drink plenty of water before going to bed.

Early ageing

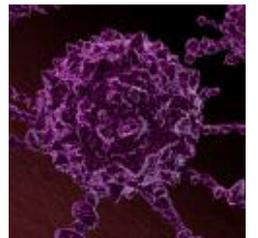
Dehydration and lack of proper sleep wrecks skin and hair. It expands blood vessels, causing thread veins and other physical symptoms.

Sleep problems

It can help us nod off but even small amounts prevent the deep sleep that we need to feel alert and refreshed.

Cancer

Drinking is the second biggest risk factor for cancers of the mouth and throat after smoking. Drinking too much could increase your risk of developing breast cancer.



Liver disease

Alcohol turns some liver cells into fat and damages others. Because the liver has no 'feeling' in it, people often don't realise it's suffering until it's too late. Repeated heavy drinking scars the liver ('liver cirrhosis') and causes permanent damage which can cause death.