

## What are the risks?

Using alcohol has a number of different risks

### Psychological:

- Exaggerated mood swings
- Angry and hostile
- Shortened attention span
- Confusion and memory problems
- Reduced inhibitions
- Disruption of sleep pattern
- Dependency and addiction
- Anxiety and depression
- Psychosis and deliriums
- Problems with coordination

### Physical:

- Falls and accidents
- High blood pressure
- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Increased heart rate
- Liver cirrhosis and hepatitis
- Higher risk of heart attack, seizure and stroke
- Alcohol poisoning & withdrawals
- Stomach ulcers
- Decreased sexual function
- Reduced fertility
- Vitamin deficiency
- Cancer
- Pancreas problems
- Death

**Drinking during pregnancy can cause harm. It is recommended to not drink at all during pregnancy.**

**Alcohol is more dangerous when mixed with other drugs such as opioids and/or benzos.**

### Did you know?

Dependence to alcohol can creep up on you. Your tolerance to alcohol gradually increases the more that you drink

## Alcohol and the law

It is illegal for an adult to buy alcohol for someone aged under 18, except where that person buys beer, wine or cider for someone aged 16 or 17 to be drunk with a table meal while accompanied by a person over 18.

The Police have the power to stop a person and confiscate alcohol in a public place if they reasonably suspect the person to be aged under 18.

The Road Safety Act of 1967 introduced the first maximum legal blood alcohol (drink driving) limit in the UK. The amount of alcohol you need to be over the limit varies from person to person so its safer to say do not drink and drive.

### Find out more

If you would like more information or support for your use of alcohol or you are affected by someone else's use please contact us at Inclusion Recovery Hampshire.

Information is also available at:

NHS Website: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Alcohol Change UK: [www.alcoholchange.org.uk](http://www.alcoholchange.org.uk)

Adfam website: [www.adfam.org.uk](http://www.adfam.org.uk)

### HOW TO CONTACT US

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Or visit: [www.staffstars.org](http://www.staffstars.org)

**You. Me. Us**

This leaflet was created by:  **NHS inclusion** Part of Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust Find out more at [www.inclusion.org](http://www.inclusion.org)

## Alcohol What you need to know!



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## What is alcohol?

Alcohol is a depressant that slows down your body's responses in various ways.

- The type of alcohol in alcoholic drinks is a chemical called ethanol.
- To make alcohol, you need to put grains, fruits or vegetables through a process called fermentation (when yeast or bacteria react with the sugars in food - the by-products are ethanol and carbon dioxide).
- Wine and cider are made by fermenting fruit, while fermented cereals such as barley and rye form the basis of beer and spirits.
- A drink's alcohol content is affected by how long it's left to ferment.
- Spirits also go through a process called distillation - where a proportion of the water is removed, leaving a stronger concentration of alcohol and flavour.

## The myths

- Alcohol is legal so it's safe
- Alcohol cannot kill you
- Beer has less units of alcohol than spirits
- Other forms of alcohol such as methanol and butanol are safe
- Black coffee sobers you up

What is true is that Alcohol can have very harmful effects on your mind and body along with creating longer-term problems. Keep reading to find out more.

## What does alcohol look like?

Alcohol is drunk orally and comes in a whole range of drinks with different alcohol strengths, colours and tastes.

'Alcopops' and ready-to-drink 'mixers' may not seem strong but they can contain more alcohol than typical bottles of beer or cider.

It comes in cans, bottles and boxes which often have labels with useful information such as how many units are in the drink.

All labels are required by law to display the strength of the drink (Alcohol by volume or ABV). It's important to be aware of this when creating longer-term problems. Keep reading to find out more.

## How do I know how much I'm drinking?

In the UK, all labels display the %ABV, they often display the number of units of alcohol too. If the units are not shown on the label you can calculate the units by multiplying its ABV by the volume of the drink (in mls) and then dividing by 1,000.

Prices vary depending on what you drink.

Because alcoholic drinks come in different strengths and sizes, units are a way to tell how strong your drink is.

One unit is 10ml or 8g of pure alcohol.

A unit is a way of expressing the actual amount of pure alcohol that is in a drink e.g. half a pint of lower-strength beer, lager or cider (ABV 3.6%), or a 25ml measure of spirits (ABV 40%) is 1 unit.

**The Government recommended that it is safest to drink no more than 14 units per week spread out over three days or more and have several drink-free days each week.**

It is advisable to have several drink free days a week.

The UK Chief Medical Officers advise that an alcohol-free childhood is the healthiest option for young people.

## What are the effects?

There are both pleasant and unpleasant effects of drinking alcohol, some are listed as follows;

- Reduce feelings of anxiety and reduce inhibitions, which can help you feel more sociable
- Alcohol is a depressant and generally slows down brain activity / functions
- Loss of balance / reduced coordination
- Affect nerves that control breathing and heartbeat, and can stop both
- Stomach irritation causing vomiting
- Stops gag reflex working properly making it easier to choke on/inhale, your own vomit
- Dehydrate you, which can cause permanent brain damage
- Lower the body's temperature, which can lead to hypothermia
- Lower your blood sugar levels, so you could have seizures
- Exaggerate the mood you're in when you start drinking
- The short term effects of alcohol can last for a day or two, depending on how much you drank, including any hangover
- More likely to take risks that you normally wouldn't take when you're sober, such as unprotected sex
- At risk of being taken advantage of or being hurt by others

