

# SENSIBLE DRINKING



16-24 year olds are the group most likely to drink as alcohol is commonly seen to be a big part of student life. Alcohol helps you feel more relaxed and brings enjoyment to your social life.

But too much drinking, and especially binge drinking, is recognized in the UK as the cause of 25% of school exclusions, 13,000 violent incidents and 40% of domestic violence.

**Don't leave alcohol taking control of your life!**

This guide is to help you to take a sensible drinking approach.



## 1. What is in a drink?

Alcohol is measured in terms of units with one unit equalling 10ml of pure alcohol.

The table below shows how many units are in the different drinks:

DRINK	UNITS
1 litre bottle of vodka	37.5 units
700ml bottle whisky	28 units
35 ml measure gin/rum/vodka/whisky	1.4 units
330ml bottle standard lager/beer	1.7 units
1 pint standard lager/beer	2.3 units
1 litre bottle of cider	5 units
1 pint strong cider	3.4 units
175ml glass standard wine	2.1 units
275ml bottle alcopop:	1.5 units

### SENSIBLE LIMITS

Sensible limits are maximum units of alcohol doctors advise not to exceed.

**Men**

3-4 units a day  
21 units a week



**Women**

2-3 units a day  
14 units a week

=> You should spend at least 2 days a week without alcohol.

=> It takes the body at least 1 hour to break down 1 unit of alcohol.

### Why sensible limits are smaller for women?

Women have less water than men in their bodies so alcohol is less diluted in the body and women get drunk quicker than men.

## **2. Alcohol and its impact on health and behavior**

When you are drinking, alcohol goes straight to your central nervous system which controls vital body functions such as speech, muscles, sense organs and sweat glands. This explains the effects of alcohol on your behaviour and health if you drink regularly above the sensible limits.

### **IMPACT ON YOUR HEALTH**

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



#### **Short term impacts:**

Dehydration which causes  
Hangover  
Nausea / vomiting  
Muscle cramps  
Dizziness  
Blurred vision

#### **Long term impacts:**

Weight gain due to calories in alcoholic drinks      Liver disease  
Early ageing visible (hair/skin)      Memory loss / brain damage  
Reduced fertility      Cancer of the mouth, throat and breast  
Sleep problem      Blood pressure, Heart disease and Stroke  
Poor mental health such as anxiety and depression

## EFFECTS ON YOUR BEHAVIOR

Alcohol does not directly cause crime or trouble but depending on how you feel at the time, drinking alcohol can change your behaviour.

Slower reactions, excitement, over confidence and increased risk taking due to alcohol can create unwilling situations as:



- Fights and arguments with friends
- Car crash
- Law breaking as street crimes, burglaries and sexual violence
- Unplanned unsafe sex which can lead to STI and pregnancy. Among the 16-24 years old, studies show that after drinking:
  - 1/7 had unsafe sex
  - 1/5 had sex which they later regretted
  - 1/10 were unable to remember whether they had sex the night before
  - 40% thought they were more likely to have casual sex
- Making regrettable decisions

## IMPACTS ON YOUR LIFE

Money worries if too much spent on alcohol

Problems at work

Cut from your friends

Not attending class

### 3. Responsible drinking

The best way to drink with responsibility is to self limit your consumption and to have a sensible drinking attitude.

#### DRINK SAFELY

Stick to sensible limits

Eat before and while you are drinking

Alternate alcoholic and soft drinks

Don't drink every day



Don't mix alcohol and drug

Drink plenty of water to avoid your body to get dry

=> Avoid drinking to get drunk, drinking in rounds or competitions to get you more drinks

#### AVOID RISKS

- Don't drive if you are drinking and designate a driver
- Avoid alcohol if you are under medication, anxious or depressed
- Don't accept drinks from strangers or leave your drink unattended in case your drink gets spiked
- Look after your friends and never leave them alone
- Use public transport or taxis to go back home



## CHANGE YOUR DRINKS HABITS

- Meet your friends somewhere other than pubs
- Refuse a drink
- Budget your drinks

If you are worrying about a mate who has drunk too much on a night out, call the ambulance on 999

## DON'T BREAK THE LAW

It is illegal to:

- Buy alcohol if you are under 18 or if it is for someone who is drunk
- Sell alcohol to someone under 18 or to someone who is drunk
- Drink alcohol on licensed premises if you are under 18
- Drink in public alcohol-free zones
- Be drunk and cause disorder in public
- Drive with more than 35microgrammes of alcohol in 100 millilitres of breath



## 4. Recognizing problem drinking

Problem drinking appears when you drink more than the sensible limit on a regular basis. Even if some people seem to be fine when drinking they may face issues related to alcohol such as health or money worries.

## SIGNS OF PROBLEM DRINKING

Not being able to socialize without drinking      Money worries

Problems at work or in studies      Poor concentration

Arguments with friends and family      Gaining weight

Being on the defensive or angry      Drinking to get drunk

Drinking in the morning      Not having days without alcohol

Drinking excessively at week ends and time off

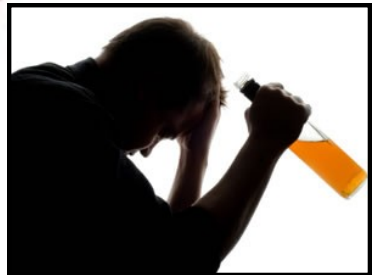
Getting into situation where your security is at risk

Memory loss of what happened when you drink

### **Need help?**

If you are facing problems try to reduce your drinks to the sensible limit and keep a diary.

Finding a healthier balance e.g. eating healthy, exercising, relaxation reduce stress and can help you to cut your drinking.



Talk to somebody about your problems and worries, you can speak to someone in confidence at Breathing Space on 0800 83 85 87 (6.00pm to 2.00am) or call the Drinkline on 0800 73 14 314 (24hours / 7days).

**For more information**

[www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk](http://www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk)

[www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk)

[www.thesite.org/](http://www.thesite.org/)

[www.downyourdrink.org.uk](http://www.downyourdrink.org.uk)

**The Welfare Point  
The Students' Union  
Queen Margaret University  
Edinburgh EH10 4JE  
0131 474 0000**

