

FACT SHEET - MODERATE AND SENSIBLE DRINKING

Drinking moderate amounts of alcohol doesn't often cause any problems, however, drinking too much can be harmful. The Department of Health advises that men should not drink more than three to four units of alcohol per day, and women should drink no more than two to three units of alcohol per day.

WHAT IS A UNIT OF ALCOHOL?

One unit of alcohol is equivalent to 10ml of pure alcohol. As a rough guide:

- 1 pint of strong lager = 3 units
- 1 pint of ordinary lager, bitter or cider, 175ml glass of wine = 2 units
- 1 alcopop = 1.5 units
- 1 measure of spirits = 1 unit
- many wines are around 11 or 12 per cent alcohol, so a small glass = 1.5 units

Lagers and ciders sold in bottles are usually stronger than those sold on draught. You can find out exactly how many units of alcohol are in the bottle by reading the label.

HOW LONG ALCOHOL STAYS IN YOUR BLOODSTREAM

On average, the body can break down alcohol at a rate of one unit per hour (depending on your weight, sex, age, metabolism, stress levels, amount of food eaten, medication taken and type of alcohol consumed).

If you get drunk, avoid alcohol for 48 hours afterwards to give your body time to recover.

WHEN NOT TO DRINK

Do not drink if a doctor or other health professional advises you to cut down, or to stop drinking, or, for example:

- before or when operating machinery and equipment
- using electrical equipment
- taking part in active sport
- you are trying to become pregnant
- you are pregnant

HEALTH RISKS

The abuse of alcohol can lead to a wide range of health problems. In the short term it may cause you to experience drowsiness, tension, dehydration, unconsciousness or even death. In the long term, it is known to contribute to more serious health problems, including liver damage, cancer and heart disease.