

Alcohol: Basics

- Alcohol is a depressant-type drug: it slows down the functioning of the brain
- Alcohol lowers the user's inhibitions — it is often served at parties because it helps people feel
 - More relaxed
 - More talkative
 - Less nervous around new people
- People using alcohol may also take more risks or do things they wouldn't normally do, e.g. become aggressive, get into fights, have accidents, or have unprotected sex
- It is illegal to sell alcohol to people under 18
- The police can take alcohol off young people who are drinking anywhere on public land



Risks:

- Frequent misuse of alcohol (e.g. regular binge drinking) can cause severe and permanent damage to the body (most commonly the liver)
- Drinking a lot of alcohol can lead to alcohol poisoning which could put you in a coma or even kill you.

Binge Drinking

- This is a term used to describe reckless and risky use of alcohol
- Binge drinking is defined as 8 or more units for men, and 6 or more units for women on at least one day in the week

Effects of Alcohol—in sequence

- Thinking and reactions are slowed down. People may make unsafe choices
- Speech becomes effected—words may be slurred
- Movement and balance is effected—people may stumble or bump into others
- Hearing begins to go—people speak louder
- Vision becomes blurred
- Breathing slows down
- Unconsciousness, coma, choking on vomit, and respiratory failure (no longer breathing) may occur

Alcohol: More

Units:

- The current recommended safe drinking levels are listed below. However this will depend on your weight and tolerance level.
 - Men 3-4 units per day,
 - Women 2-3 units per day
- The number of units in a drink varies according to the type of drink, and how much is in the can/bottle/glass etc
- The higher the percentage the stronger the drink, e.g.
 - 3.5% in beer/lager/cider
 - 5% in strong beer/lager/cider
 - 8% in extra strong beers/lagers
 - 13% in wine
 - 20% in sherry
 - 38% in vodka
 - 40% in whiskey



The Liver

- Alcohol is toxic (poisonous)
- The liver has to clean the alcohol from the blood. This is the main way that alcohol is removed from the body
- The liver can clean the blood at about one unit of alcohol per hour
- After a heavy night of drinking there may still be a lot of alcohol in the bloodstream.

Driving

- The legal limit is 80mg/100mls of blood
- How much a person can drink before going over this limit depends on their size and their gender
- Roughly speaking 1 unit of alcohol will raise the alcohol in the blood by about 15mg/100mls
- However, it is safest to avoid alcohol altogether if you are going to drive because even at very low doses it can slow down reaction times



■ Alcohol: Basics

■ Alcohol: More

■ Harm Minimisation

Harm Minimisation

Drink slowly — sip your drink

Choose a less alcoholic drink

Avoid mixing beer with spirits

Eat with, or before drinking

Buy your own drinks—avoid getting into rounds

Space your drinks with a non-alcoholic drink

Plan how long you will be out, and how much you will spend.

Only take a certain amount of money with you.

Keep an eye on your drink so that it doesn't get spiked

Get help from your doctor or a specialist agency if you are worried about your drinking

Avoid mixing alcohol with other types of depressant drug such as heroin, GHB, and tranquillizers,