

## Looking after yourself: Sensible Drinking

This leaflet can be made available  
in alternative languages / formats on request.

如有需要，本传单可提供其他语言/版式  
此單張的其他語言/格式版本可按要求提供

Na żądanie ta ulotka może zostać udostępniona  
w innych językach/formatkach.

Whiston Hospital  
Warrington Road,  
Prescot, Merseyside, L35 5DR  
Telephone: 0151 426 1600



/sthknhs



@sthk.nhs

[www.sthk.nhs.uk](http://www.sthk.nhs.uk)

**Author:** Musculoskeletal Therapy Team  
**Department:** Therapy Services  
**Document Number:** STHK0933  
**Version:** 003  
**Review date:** 01 / 11 / 2024

## Sensible Drinking

After a long day, many of us like to unwind with a nice glass of something. But it is funny how drink can sneak up on us. The odd glass in the evening can quickly become two or three regular glasses, most evenings.

The trouble is that drink sneaks up on bodies too – it can give our organs a hard time. Regularly drinking over the guidelines can lead to serious health problems, and do not forget that alcohol also contains calories, so it can help to give you a bit of a spare tyre.

### Alcohol consumption can have an impact on your health

Regularly drinking over the lower risk guidelines increases the chances of suffering more serious health harms such as:

- Cancer of the throat, oesophagus or larynx. Regularly drinking two large glasses of wine (ABV 13%) or two pints of strong lager (ABV 5.2%) a day could make you three times as likely to get mouth cancer
- Regularly drinking just above the guidelines increases the risk of getting breast cancer by around 20%
- A stroke
- Heart disease which can lead to a heart attack
- High blood pressure
- Liver disease such as liver cancer. If you regularly drink just above the lower-risk guidelines, the risk of liver cirrhosis increases 1.7 times
- Pancreatitis
- Reduced fertility.

## Notes

## Contact information

Acute Musculoskeletal Therapy Team:

0151 676 5519

## Help and Advice

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

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

St. Helens Footsteps – if you are worried about your own drinking or have concerns about others 01744 808212

## The lower risk daily guidelines

It can be a bit tricky to understand and remember how much alcohol is in drinks, and how this can affect our health. The lower risk guidelines can help with this. All you really need to do, if you choose to drink, is to stick within the guidelines below.

No one can say that drinking alcohol is absolutely safe, but by keeping within these guidelines, there is only a low risk of causing harm in most circumstances.

- Women: 2 - 3 units per day. That is no more than a 175ml glass of wine (ABV 13%).
- Men: 3 - 4 units per day. That is not much more than a pint of strong lager, beer or cider. (ABV 5.2%).



## Health benefits

If you regularly drink above the lower-risk guidelines, cutting back on alcohol can help your general wellbeing.

Once you start cutting back, you will probably notice the benefits quite quickly:

- Feeling better in the mornings
- Having more energy and feeling less tired during the day
- Your skin may start to look better
- Alcohol contains hidden calories and you can easily pile on the pounds. So if you cut back you will start to feel in better shape. Your immune system will be able to fight off bugs more easily which can contribute to better general health.
- As time goes on, you may also find you are in a better mood more often. Heavy drinking can be linked to depression, and sometimes a hangover can leave you feeling low. If you already feel anxious or sad when you are sober, drinking can make this worse. So drinking less can mean you feel happier, more of the time.

## Medical warning:

If you have physical withdrawal symptoms (like shaking, sweating, or feeling anxious until you have a first drink of the day), you should take medical advice before stopping completely as it can be dangerous to do this too quickly without proper advice and support.

## Easy drink swaps

You can still have a drink – just aim to have less, gradually, and stick within the guidelines. Our easy swap ideas can make it easy for you to cut down on alcohol instead of cutting it out altogether.

- If you tend to have a drink at a certain time of day, break the habit by doing something different at that time.
- Try to have at least two days a week when you do not drink.
- Why not try pacing and spacing? Pace yourself by sipping slowly and enjoy the taste. And space your drinks out – have a soft drink or glass of water in between.
- Have a smaller bottle of beer instead of a can. Or a single instead of a double.
- Swap your usual for a drink with less alcohol. Choose one with less alcohol content (“ABV” - you can find this on the side of the bottle or can).

## Cut down on alcohol and reduce the risk

Cutting back on the amount of alcohol you drink means that you are reducing the risk of further harming your health.

It can make a difference to how you feel now and a big difference to your health later on.

