

## Reviewing your drinking

Ask your pharmacist or doctor whether it's safe to mix your medicine with alcohol.

If you are worried about your alcohol use, talk to your GP. S/he will be able to offer you information and advice, and refer you to the support or service best suited to your needs.

Talk to family and friends who you think could be of help.

It's never too late to make the changes that will make your life even better.

For general information on alcohol go to [www.alcoholireland.ie](http://www.alcoholireland.ie)

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# Alcohol and Getting Older: Ageing Well



## Your health and alcohol

Many of us enjoy a drink particularly in a social occasion with friends or family:

- As we age, however, our ability to break down alcohol is reduced and we are more susceptible to the effects of alcohol. As a result, a person can develop problems with alcohol as they grow older, even when drinking habits remain the same
- Drinking too much, too often can cause new health problems and can worsen existing health conditions. It can increase the risk of high blood pressure, stroke, a number of cancers as well as the risk of osteoporosis, a disease which weakens the bones
- Drinking too much affects co-ordination and balance, and can put someone at risk of injury
- Many of us as we age take medication, often a number of medicines at the same time. Mixing alcohol with some medicines can cause them not to work, and can even damage health
- Sometimes we drink to relieve feelings of sadness, loneliness, stress or worry. Although drinking alcohol can initially make someone feel better, it is a depressant, and feelings of anxiety and depression can quickly come back sometimes even stronger

## There are many benefits associated with reducing your drinking



### Tips to help cut down

There are many benefits associated with reducing your drinking including: better physical appearance, saving money, better sleep and improved health.

- Take part in activities without alcohol that make you feel good, that you enjoy: dancing; walking; playing cards, etc.
- Consider volunteering – your talents and skills could be needed by a number of organisations
- Remove or reduce alcohol in the home
- Try having a hot drink as a nightcap instead of alcohol
- Avoid drinking alcohol if you're feeling ill, depressed, anxious or lonely
- Is it time to pick up an interest or hobby you used to enjoy or even start a new one?

## How much is too much?

**The guidelines for low-risk drinking are up to 14 units a week for a woman (11 standard drinks) and 21 units for a man (17 standard drinks), spread out over the week with at least 2/3 days alcohol free.** These guidelines apply to healthy adults - if you are ill or on medication, these low-risk guidelines may be too high. Talk to your doctor about what's best for you.

The following measurements are based on alcohol commonly available in Ireland:

- A quarter bottle of wine (175mls), 12% ABV (alcohol by volume) contains just over 2 units of alcohol - a 750mls bottle is around 9 units
- A 750 ml bottle of wine, 14.5% ABV (alcohol by volume) contains close to 11 units
- A pint of beer is around 2 units but if the beer is stronger for example 5% ABV (alcohol by volume) then it is closer to 3 units
- A bottle of beer, 4.7% ABV (alcohol by volume) contains 1.6 units
- A half pint of cider, 4.5% ABV (alcohol by volume) contains 1.3 units, a 275ml bottle of cider at 5.3% ABV (alcohol by volume) contains 1.5 units
- A pub spirits measure of 35mls and based on a 40% ABV (alcohol by volume) is around 1.4 units
- An alcopop is around 1.4 units