

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT WHAT DRINK IS DOING TO YOU

EARLY SIGNS OF PROBLEM DRINKING

- Drinking faster than everyone else
- Often drinking to cope with problems
- Not being able to stop drinking once you start
- Secretly doubling up, sneaking drinks
- High tolerance to alcohol (can take a lot before you feel drunk)
- Blackouts (memory loss)
- Need a drink first thing in the morning to get going
- Feeling guilty after drinking

TIPS FOR DRINKING SLOWER

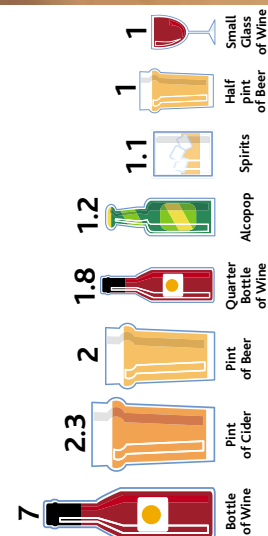
- S**maller drinks: a glass instead of a pint. A single instead of a double.
- L**ease your glass down between sips. Wait a while before getting another.
- O**ccupy yourself. Play pool, music, dance, chat.
- W**hy not try alcohol-free beers, lagers, cocktails to break up your alcoholic drinks?
- E**at before and while you drink.
- R**ounds should be avoided. If it's too awkward, then buy yourself a mineral when it's your shout.

More about cutting down in 'Less is More: A Guide to Rethinking Your Drinking', Health Promotion Unit booklet available from GPs, Health Centres, etc.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME IF I DRINK LESS?

- Less chance of hangover
- More fun, fewer regrets, more in control
- Fewer arguments
- More money
- Less weight gain
- If pregnant, better chance of baby being born healthy
- Lowered risk of breast and other cancers
- Lowered risk of liver and other health problems

HOW STRONG IS YOUR USUAL?



HOW DOES A WOMAN'S BODY HANDLE ALCOHOL?

- Men have more bodily fluid than women, so alcohol is more dilute in their system.
- Women also tend to be smaller, so have less tissue to absorb alcohol.
- Women have less of an enzyme need to break down alcohol in the stomach.

WHAT CAUSES HANGOVER?

- Your body reacts to alcohol by trying to flush it out. This causes dehydration and headache.
- Alcohol irritates the lining of the stomach causing stomach upset.

- Pacing your drinks and taking lots of non-alcoholic fluids helps to prevent hangover.

WHY DO SOME PEOPLE GET TEARFUL?

- Alcohol can exaggerate your mood. So drinking because you are upset can be a bad move.
- It is a 'depressant' drug. In larger amounts, alcohol can make you feel tearful, depressed or aggressive.

WHY SHOULD YOU NOT MIX DRINKS?

The amount of ethanol (pure alcohol) in drinks is fixed. Mixing drinks

doesn't change this. But you can make yourself sick from mixing drinks. Some drinks have additives (known as 'congeners') that do not mix.

IS IT OK TO DRINK ON MEDICATION?

- The leaflet with your medication will tell you. Your GP or Pharmacist can also advise.
- Drinking on top of other depressant drugs is particularly dangerous, including tranquillisers and anti-depressants.
 - Other depressants include cannabis, opiates and solvents.

CAN COFFEE SOBER YOU UP?

- Your body can only break down alcohol at a slow steady pace.
- Drinking coffee will make you a wide awake drunk.
 - Taking a cold shower will make you a cold wet drunk.
 - But they can not lower your blood alcohol concentration.

ROUGHLY ONE DRINK PER HOUR IS A USEFUL GUIDELINE AS THIS IS THE RATE AT WHICH YOUR LIVER BREAKS DOWN ALCOHOL.

IS THERE ANY GOOD NEWS?

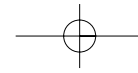
- In moderate amounts, alcohol can add to the fun of an occasion and help us feel relaxed.
- For women over the menopause, some experts are recommending 1 or 2 drinks a day to help lessen the risk of heart disease.
- Unfortunately you can not get a headstart by starting younger!
- The type of drink does not matter, despite the popular belief that red wine is best.

THE LITTLE BOOK OF WOMEN AND ALCOHOL



PULL OUT DOWN AND FLIP





STAYING OUT OF THE RISK ZONE

Up to 14 standard drinks a week is considered low risk for women*

TAKE A BREAK

3+ drinks a day puts you at health risk.

S-P-R-E-A-D out your drinking over the week with at least 2 alcohol-free days to reduce the risk.

DAMAGE LIMITATION

If we are honest, most of us know the point where we start to really lose control.

Try to stay well below this limit.

**Doesn't apply equally to everyone*

DRINK DIARY

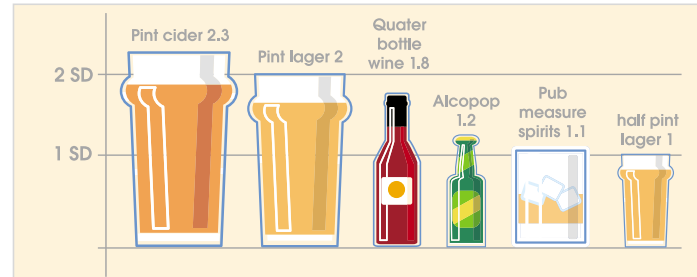
Keep a WEEKLY DRINK DIARY to see how much you drink and in what situations you drink most.

Note the details of any session that goes wrong. If you can pinpoint why, you can try to avoid this next time.

WHAT IF I OVERDO IT?

- Stay off alcohol for at least 48 hours to allow your system to recover.
- Eat healthily.
- Take some gentle exercise.
- Rest.

HOW STRONG IS YOUR USUAL?



1 STANDARD DRINK CONTAINS 10G OF PURE ALCOHOL



COUNTING THE COST

- Alcohol is cheaper now in real terms than it used to be. Hard to believe, but true!

Try calculating your weekly and annual spend on alcohol.

Typical spend on a night out

Typical weekly spend

Annual spend on alcohol

BUT I'M NO 'ALCOHOLIC'

You don't have to be dependent on alcohol to benefit from drinking less. If your drinking is linked to any problems you have – small or serious – cutting down can help.

"In health terms, simply drinking above the low-risk levels increases the risk of wide range of illnesses - cancers, coronary heart disease and strokes, obesity, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, digestive problems, loss of cognitive function, birth defects".

Alcohol Concern Website

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ALCOHOL & PREGNANCY

Stopping drinking during pregnancy is the safest advice. Baby's vital organs e.g. heart, brain & skeleton are formed between 10–50 days after conception. Often, this is before you know you are pregnant. Cutting down or stopping alcohol while trying to become pregnant protects your baby. There are risks to your baby if you continue to drink, even in small quantities:

- The more you drink, the greater the amount passed on to your baby.
- More than 3 drinks a day increases the risk of miscarriage.
- More than 12 drinks a week increases the risk of premature birth.
- Avoid binge drinking, as sudden high levels of alcohol damage the developing brain.
- Children exposed to alcohol in pregnancy often show poor attention and hyperactivity, that may only become evident when they are a few years old.
- **There is no known safe level of alcohol use in pregnancy, and stopping completely is advised.**

STOP! THINK TWICE! CUT IT OUT!

ALCOHOL & BREAST CANCER

- A woman's risk of breast cancer increases by 7% for every additional drink consumed per day.
- "The balance between the harmful effects of alcohol on breast cancer and it's beneficial effects on heart disease depend on a woman's age. Before about 60, breast cancer is a more important cause of death than heart disease. After the age of 65 or so, when the risk of heart disease becomes much greater than the risk of breast cancer, the benefits of moderate drinking are apparent."*
- Report in British Journal of Cancer, 2002

ALCOHOL & SEXUAL PROBLEMS

- Research suggests alcohol increases desire but decreases physiological stimulation in both women and men.
- Heavy drinkers can have impotence and fertility problems.
- Long-term heavy alcohol misuse may result in ovulation failure and general menstrual problems.

ALCOHOL & CRISIS PREGNANCY

- People often do things they normally would not when they are drunk.
- The link between drinking and unplanned and unprotected sex is undisputed.
- Alcohol is an important factor in crisis and unplanned pregnancies.
- One in three Irish teenagers say alcohol is a factor in their having sex.

"Demand for emergency conception (the 'Morning After' pill) has increased in Well Woman clinics by 60% in the last three years, with heavy alcohol consumption being a huge contributory factor here. We have also seen a dramatic increase in the numbers of women presenting for screening for sexually-transmitted infections".

Alison Begas, Chief Executive of the Wellwoman Centre

ALCOHOL & RAPE

- Alcohol shows up in those tested for drug-assisted rape 29 times more often than all the other drug-rape drugs put together (UK figures).
- The slogan in one American state is

**"Alcohol – the original date rape drug.
Say no while you still can"**

ALCOHOL & SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STI's)

- STI's have increased by 165% in the last ten years. 8,900 cases were reported in 2000 alone.
- Alcohol consumption surged over the same period (41% increase over decade 1991 – 2001).

ALCOHOL & MARITAL BREAKDOWN

- Regular heavy drinking can create a powerful psychological dependence on alcohol.
- To the drinker, nothing else seems to matter.
- 34% of clients using legal services for marital breakdown in Ireland say alcohol abuse is the main cause of their marital problems.

I'M WORRIED ABOUT MY PARTNER'S DRINKING – WHAT CAN I DO?

Problem drinking is often kept as a secret, even within the family. Talk to each other about what's really happening. Remember:

- You are not alone
- You are not to blame
- Your loved one's drinking is not your responsibility

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Go to the alcohol section of the Department of Health & Children website www.healthpromotion.ie
The Health Promotion Department of your local Health Service Executive office will have leaflets and further factual information. **If you are worried about your own drinking**, or that of someone you care about, find out about alcohol counselling services in your area by speaking to your GP, or contacting your local Health Service Executive office.

CAN YOU DIET AND DRINK ALCOHOL?

- Cutting down on alcohol is one of the healthiest ways to control your weight.
- How many of us watch calories, but don't really count drink? Big mistake.
- The 200 calories in a pint of lager, for instance, matches the calories in a bar of chocolate, an ice cream or a bag of crisps.

Use the CALORIE GUIDE to count your calories on a typical night out.

CALORIE GUIDE

The drink	The calories
Pint lager	200
Pint stout	170
Pint cider	210
Longneck cider	122
Longneck alcopop	220
Medium glass wine (175ml)	130
Pub measure vodka, gin, brandy, whisky	80
Pub measure cream liqueur	120

BURNING OFF A PINT

To burn off the calories from 1 pint of lager, you would need to:

Walk for	50 mins
Swim for	30 mins
Dance for	35 mins
Play golf for	1 hour & 20 mins
Do aerobics for	32 mins