

Understanding Alcohol and Your Health

During your medical assessment today, we discussed your alcohol consumption.

Alcohol forms part of many people's lives, but drinking more than the recommended limits can affect your health. This leaflet explains alcohol units, current low-risk drinking guidance and practical steps that may help you make informed choices about your drinking.

What is a unit of alcohol?

A unit is a standard way of measuring the amount of pure alcohol in a drink, regardless of the type or size of the drink.

One unit contains 10ml (8g) of pure alcohol.

The number of units in a drink depends on both:

- the size of the drink
- its alcoholic strength, shown as a percentage of alcohol by volume (% ABV)

Understanding alcohol units

The guide below shows the approximate number of units found in some common alcoholic drinks.

The strength and serving size of drinks can vary, so always check the label or use an alcohol-unit calculator when you are unsure.

Pint of beer, lager or cider (4% ABV)  2.3 UNITS	Alco-pop 275ml (5% ABV)  1.4 UNITS	175ml glass of wine (13% ABV)  2.3 UNITS	250ml glass of wine (13% ABV)  3.3 UNITS	Single spirit shot 25ml (40% ABV)  1.0 UNIT	Bottle of wine (13% ABV)  9.8 UNITS
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The weekly guideline

To keep health risks from alcohol low, men and women are advised not to regularly drink more than:

14 units a week

If you regularly drink up to 14 units:

- spread your drinking over 3 or more days rather than drinking it all at once
- include drink-free days each week

Remember

Drinking less alcohol is one of the most effective ways to reduce your long-term health risks. Even small reductions can have a positive effect on your health and wellbeing.

Turn over for practical guidance on low-risk drinking and when to seek further medical advice.

Lower-risk drinking advice

To help keep health risks from alcohol lower:

- Do not regularly drink more than 14 units a week
- Spread your drinking over 3 or more days
- Include drink-free days each week
- Choose smaller servings or lower-strength drinks
- Keep track of how much you drink

If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant, the safest approach is not to drink alcohol.

Drink more safely

If you choose to drink alcohol:

- Eat before and while drinking
- Drink more slowly
- Alternate alcoholic drinks with water or soft drinks
- Plan how you will get home safely
- Avoid drinking large amounts in one session

When should I seek medical advice?

Speak to your GP if:

- you are finding it difficult to cut down
- alcohol is affecting your health, work or relationships
- you are worried about your drinking

Do not suddenly stop drinking without medical advice if you think you may be dependent on alcohol.

Seek urgent medical attention if someone becomes confused, loses consciousness, has a seizure or their breathing becomes slow or irregular after drinking alcohol.

Remember

Reducing how much you drink can improve your sleep, energy levels, mood and long-term health.

Even small reductions in the amount you drink can have a positive effect on your health and wellbeing.

This leaflet provides general guidance following your workplace medical assessment and does not replace advice from your GP or another qualified healthcare professional. Information based on current NHS guidance. Review date: July 2026.



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