

Making Every Contact Count (MEEC) Health and Well being

Moderating Alcohol Intake

For a lot of people, drinking with friends and family is an enjoyable treat. But for a lot of people, bad drinking habits can lead to more serious health problems.

In 2016 new alcohol guidelines were published by the UK's chief medical officers to enable people to make informed choices about their drinking and reduce alcohol-related health harms.

The drinking guidelines now recommend the same low-risk level for men and women. This is because, while long-term alcohol-related risks are generally higher for women than men, men face much higher risks of acute harm (e.g. injury) on single drinking occasions. The lower-risk level is therefore set at the same amount for both genders.

Pregnant women should avoid drinking altogether; while the previous guidelines recommended that pregnant women avoid drinking, it also said that if pregnant women choose to drink, they should consume no more than one or two units once or twice a week. The new guidelines adopt a more precautionary approach, with the view that a simple no-drinking message will avoid confusion.

Guidelines

To keep your health risks from drinking alcohol to a low level, men and women should not regularly exceed 14 units of alcohol per week and it's advised that this is spread across 3 days or more.

It could be:

- 14 single (25ml) measures of a spirit that is 40% ABV or less
- 6 glasses (175ml) of wine that is 13% ABV or less
- 6 pints (568ml) of beer/lager/cider that is 4% ABV or less

Remember – drinks you pour at home may be larger measures than in a pub.

For pregnant women, the safest approach is not to drink at all to keep risk to the baby to a minimum



Government Alcohol Guidelines

Drinkaware explains



Unit guidelines are now the **SAME** for **men & women**. **BOTH** are advised **not to regularly drink** more than **14 units a week**

This is what 14 units looks like:



6 pints of 4% beer

6 glasses of
13% wine



175ml glasses



25ml
glasses

14 glasses of
40% spirits

BUT don't 'save up' your 14 units, it's best to **spread evenly** across the **week**.

If you want to cut down the amount you're drinking, a good way is to have several **drink-free days** each week.



Note: 175ml 13% ABV wine and 4% ABV beer

Keep the short-term health risks low by:

- **limiting** the total amount of **alcohol** in **one session**
- **drinking** more **slowly**, alternating with **food** and/or **water**

The **new guidelines** have been set at a level to keep the **risk of cancers** or other diseases **low**.

Patient Information

Remember, the more that you drink; the more likely you are to have health problems related to alcohol. It's easy to slip into drinking more without even being aware of it. To get a sense of whether you might be drinking at hazardous or harmful levels, try completing an alcohol audit tool which can be found at alcoholconcern.org.uk.

Does alcohol affect people in different ways?

Yes, how alcohol affects individuals depends on a wide range of factors including genetic makeup, diet, weight, general health and age. You may need to stop completely if you:

- Have a health problem, like liver or heart disease.
- You regularly have memory blackouts, so you can't remember things that happened while you were drinking.
- Are worried that you may be or are alcohol dependent.

What should I do if I am concerned about my drinking?

- Keep a drinks diary to keep a track of how much you are consuming
- Avoid drinking in rounds
- Alternate alcoholic drinks with soft drinks
- Take more alcohol free days
- Do more activities that don't involve alcohol
- Download the 'Dry January and Beyond' app that helps you track your drinking, provide advice and tips for cutting down

Cutting down

There are plenty of reasons to cut down your drinking. If you want to drink less you need to set yourself goals. If you choose to drink, your ultimate goal should be to drink within the lower risk guidelines. There are 6 easy steps you can follow to help you:

Step 1: Think of some good reasons why you want to change

Such as saving money, losing weight, better sleep, and better health

Step 2: Set your goals

Set a limit to the amount that you will drink each week, or plan the amount of days you will be alcohol free each week.

Step 3: Know when you might slip up

Think of the situations that may encourage you to drink like celebrations, habits, going out with friends.

Step 4: Plan for the times when you might slip up

Switching to low or no alcohol drinks, exercise instead of going to the pub or let family and friends know you are cutting down.

Step 5: Find support if you need it

Ask friends or family for support or join a support group in your area.

Patient Information

Step 6: Stick to your goals

If you take it seriously, this plan can help you break the habit of drinking. And remember to track your units.

Medical warning

Important – If you have physical withdrawal such as shaking, sweating or feelings of anxiety until you have your 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.

Information and support

If you are worried that you are drinking too much, go to see your GP, they will be able to answer any questions that you may have.

Drinkline is the national alcohol helpline. If you are worried about your own or someone else's drinking, you can call this free helpline, in complete confidence on: 0800 917 8282 (Weekdays 9am-8pm, weekends 11am-4pm)

Local support

- **CGL Coventry** – based at 1 Lamb Street. CGL Coventry is a free and confidential drug and alcohol service for adults (including offenders), families and affected others. <https://www.changegrowlive.org/content/CGL-coventry>
- **The Recovery partnership Warwickshire** – bases in Rugby, Nuneaton, Leamington and Stratford. <http://www.cw-recovery.org.uk/>
- Alcoholics Anonymous have various group meetings around the City. The following link takes you to their website <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/>

MECC Health & Well-being

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