

Understanding alcohol

An easy read educational resource

This resources has been co-developed by ASCERT and SEHSCT Health Development, supported by the Public Health Agency through the Clear Project

Alcohol drinks

The types of drinks below contain alcohol



Beer, Lager and Cider



Wines



Spirits, like vodka, gin or whiskey

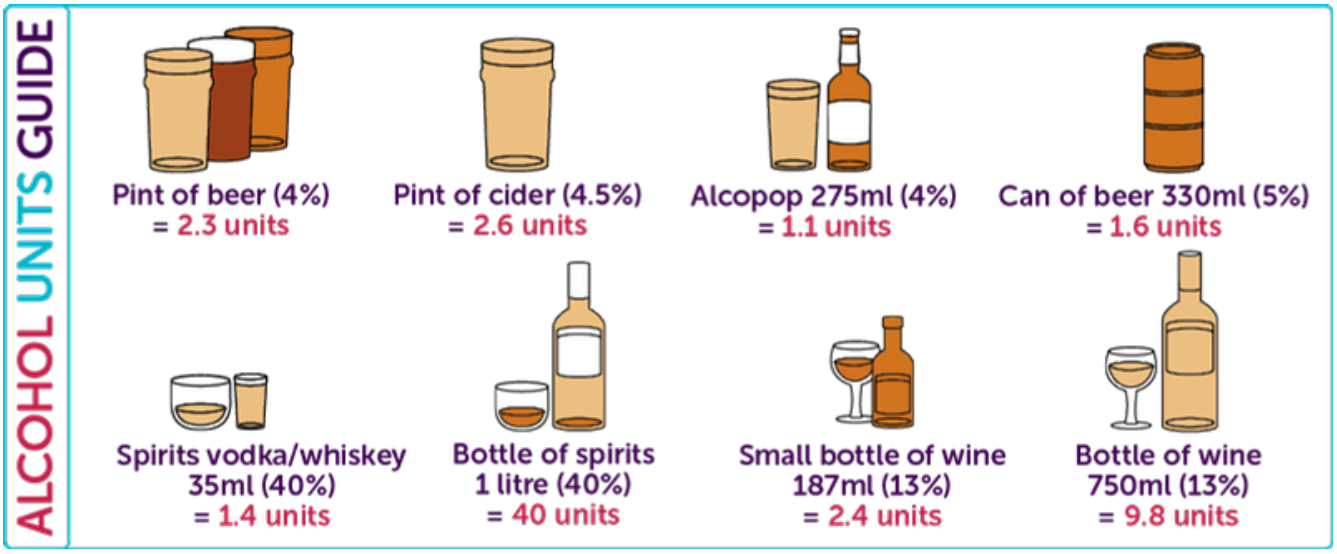


Alcopops

The amount of alcohol in drinks is called **units**.

One unit is 10 ml of pure alcohol.

It takes an average adult around **one hour** to process **one unit** of alcohol so that there's none left in their bloodstream. This varies from person to person.



Alcohol guidelines



Adults regularly drinking more than **14 units** of alcohol a week is bad for you.



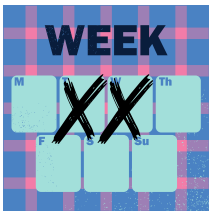
14 units of alcohol is about 5 pints of beer or cider



Or 6 glasses of wine



Or 10 drinks of spirits



It is recommended you should not drink any alcohol at least two days a week.



Young people are advised not to drink before they are 18.

Alcohol can be more harmful to young people because their brains and organs are still developing.

How alcohol affects you



You might drink alcohol because you like how it tastes or how it makes you feel.

You may drink because your friends do, so you drink too.



Alcohol is a chemical. Drinking it makes changes in your brain.

This means it changes how you do things and how you feel.



When you drink a little alcohol it can make you feel more relaxed.



Drinking alcohol can make it harder to think or speak clearly.

You can get blurred vision.



You might act silly.



You can become dehydrated.

How alcohol affects you



You might feel dizzy



You could fall over and hurt yourself



If you drink too much you may feel sick and vomit. If you drink a lot of alcohol you might feel sick the next day.



You might forget things that you did when you were drinking.



Alcohol affects your sleep. It can leave you looking and feeling tired.



Alcohol can change your mood. You might feel angry or sad.

Alcohol and your health

Drinking too much for a long time can be bad for your health.

It can increase your risk of a heart failure or stroke



It can damage your liver, heart, brain or stomach.

It can lead to high blood pressure

It increases your risk of getting some cancers.

It can lower your protection against infections

Someone who is pregnant should not drink alcohol because it can harm the baby

All these problems are serious and can eventually lead to death

Social effects of alcohol



Drinking too much regularly can cause other problems in your life.



It can damage relationships. You may fall out with people you love, your family or friends.



It can cause problems at school or work.



Alcohol is expensive. If you are drinking a lot it could lead to money problems.



You could get in trouble with the police.

Tips to help reduce problems from alcohol



Not everyone drinks alcohol.

You don't need to drink to have fun.

You can choose to not drink alcohol at all.



If you do drink alcohol there are lots of ways to reduce the risk of problems.



Drink no-alcohol or low-alcohol drinks.



Don't drink alcohol every day.

Decide at least two days when you wont drink any alcohol.



Decide the number of drinks you will have before you start and stick to it.



Drink slowly. Don't drink a whole drink at once.

Set your drink down between sips.

Tips to help reduce problems from alcohol



Have a glass of water or a soft drink between alcohol drinks.



Don’t drink on an empty stomach. Have a good meal first.



Have smaller drinks. Have small bottle of beer instead of a pint. Or have a small glass of wine instead of a large one.



Know how much you are drinking.

Don't pour big drinks. When someone pours wine or spirits from a bottle at home they usually pour bigger drinks than in a pub.



Don’t buy rounds of drinks with other people. It forces you to have to catch up with them.

Do not drink alone. Make sure you are with someone that can look after you.



If you start to feel unwell or don’t like how you feel then do not drink any more alcohol.

Alcohol and medicines



It can be dangerous to mix alcohol with some medicines.

Ask your doctor if it is safe to drink alcohol with your medication.



If you have epilepsy drinking alcohol can cause more fits and seizures



Your tablets can make you get drunk more quickly

Alcohol can make the side effects from your medication worse



If you are drinking alcohol you can become forgetful.

It is important not to forget to take your medication.



If you are drinking alcohol and you become unwell, you should stop drinking.

Alcohol addiction



Some people that drink a lot of alcohol regularly can become addicted to alcohol.

This means you find it hard to stop drinking alcohol even though you know its causing you problems.

People addicted to alcohol feel bad or sick when they are not drinking alcohol .

If you stop drinking alcohol but have the signs below, you might need help to stop safely.

Shaking



Nausea

Anxiety

Blackouts

Sweats

There are other signs that you may have an alcohol addiction

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If you have strong cravings to drink alcohol

If you cant limit how much alcohol you drink

If you need to drink more alcohol to get the same effect

Getting help with alcohol problems



You may want to drink less or stop drinking alcohol completely but cant do it without help.



You should not feel embarrassed or frightened about asking for help.

It is ok to ask for help. There are people whose job it is to help with alcohol problems.

If you want help you can ask your doctor and they can organise it.



There are also community based services for alcohol and drug use.

You can call ASCERT on 0800 2545 123

SCAN ME

You can also scan this QR code or visit www.drugsandalcoholni.info for details of all services across Northern Ireland.