

# BINGE

A NIGHT ON THE TOWN





For most people having a drink can be a positive experience. Having a night out and a laugh with your mates after a long weeks work or study, helps you to relax and wind down.

Alcohol can help you to chill out, make you less shy, give you the confidence to deliver the killer chat up line.

But hammering it every weekend and sometimes during the week can lead to some serious short-and long- term health issues to deal with.

This booklet will help you think about your drinking and offer practical and sensible information and advice about how to reduce the harm caused by alcohol.

# ALCOHOL

Alcohol is a depressant drug. It is absorbed through the intestines and stomach into your blood and is sent to your brain where it slows down your central nervous system and alters your mood, perception, movement, vision and hearing. Your body flushes out most of the alcohol through your liver, but a small amount of alcohol is also expelled in your sweat and breath, this is how a breathalyser measures the amount of alcohol in your system.

## Short-term effects of alcohol

- > Relaxation
- > Increased confidence
- > Talkativeness
- > Anxiety
- > Sexual difficulties such as impotence
- > Bad judgement, leading to accidents and injuries
- > Alcohol poisoning. This could lead to a loss of consciousness and could be fatal

## Long-term effects of alcohol

- > Cirrhosis of the liver
- > Inflamed stomach or pancreas
- > Certain cancers such as throat cancer
- > High blood pressure

## People's reaction to alcohol can vary and depends on things like

- > Age
- > Gender
- > Body height and weight
- > If you have eaten
- > How quickly you drink
- > If you have used any legal or illegal drugs

## BINGE DRINKING

Binge drinking means different things to different people, but generally, it means drinking lots of alcohol over a short period with the intention of getting hammered.

## RISKS AND PROBLEMS

### > **Accidents and violence**

Alcohol can make you reckless and impulsive, binge drinking can lead to an increased chance of falls, car accidents and becoming the perpetrator or victim of violence.

### > **Physical health**

Consuming large quantities of alcohol over a short period of time means your body cannot process the alcohol quickly enough. Alcohol can build up to dangerous levels and the extra stress on your body's organs can lead to an increased risk of high blood pressure, heart disease and certain cancers.

### > **Alcohol poisoning**

Alcohol depresses the nerves that control your breathing and gag reflex (which prevents choking). A fatal dose of alcohol can stop these functions. If you vomit while you are not conscious because of alcohol, you could choke to death.

A close-up photograph of a white plastic bottle cap, likely from a beer or soda bottle, resting on a light-colored wooden surface. The cap is slightly tilted, showing its top and the opening. The background is a blurred wooden texture.

## How much do you drink?

Alcohol is measured in units. You can calculate the amount you drink by knowing how many units of alcohol are in your drink.

### WHAT IS A UNIT?

A unit is 10ml by amount or 8gm by weight, of pure alcohol (Ethanol).

To work out the number of units in a drink, multiply the volume (in millilitres) by %ABV then divide the result by 1000.

### WHAT IS %ABV?

ABV means Alcohol By Volume. A 750ml (75cl) bottle of wine which stated 12% ABV on the label means that 12% of the liquid in the bottle is alcohol. A 700ml (70cl) bottle of vodka which has an ABV of 37/38% on the bottle, would contain almost 3 times the amount of alcohol/units for roughly the same amount of liquid.

### HOW MUCH SHOULD YOU DRINK?

The suggested alcohol limit for males and females is the same: Don't regularly drink more than 14 units per week (6 pints of 4% beer, or 6 glasses of 13% wine). These limits will help reduce potential health problems.

If you drink up to 14 units a week, spread these across a few days and have at least two drink-free days a week.

**Can of lager**  
440ml  
**2 units**  
(Normal strength)

**Small glass  
of wine**  
125ml  
**1.5 units**

**Bottle of  
strong lager**  
330ml  
**2 units**

**Bottle of  
wine**  
750ml  
**10 units**

**Shot**  
35ml  
**1.3 units**  
(Tequila,  
Sambuca etc)

**Bottle of  
strong cider**  
1000ml  
**9 units**

**Standard size  
bottle of spirits**  
750ml  
**26-28 units**

**Single pub  
measure of  
spirit**  
25ml  
**1.3 units**

# STAYING SAFE

The information in this section will help make your night out as enjoyable and safe as possible.

## PRE-LOADING

A few drinks with your mate to loosen up as you get ready to go out can turn into a session. You are two and a half times more likely to get into a fight or have an accident than people who only start drinking when they go out. You are more likely to be refused entry to a club or pub if you are drunk.

## ALCOHOL AND THE LAW

### Drunk and disorderly

It is illegal to be drunk and disorderly in public. If you have had a skinful try not to attract attention by acting like an idiot. If you are arrested by the police, once you are fit to be dealt with, you will normally either be cautioned, be issued with a Penalty Notice for Disorder (PND - £80 fine in ticket form) or, depending on the offence, end up in court.

### Drinking outside

It isn't illegal to drink in public but many areas, such as city centres, have alcohol-free zones, where drinking outside is not allowed. Under-18s can have their alcohol confiscated if they drink outside, no matter where they are.



## Entering the pub or club

It is illegal for a pub or club to sell alcohol to someone who is drunk or is conducting themselves in a 'disorderly manner'. It is illegal for you to refuse to leave a licensed premises when asked by the police, the licensee or someone acting on their behalf, such as the doorstaff.

Pubs or clubs have the right to ask anyone entering the premises to be searched. If you do agree, and you have the right to refuse, the search can only be on the outside of the clothes, pockets and inside bags.

## MIXING DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Using drugs is risky in itself but mixing them with alcohol can make the effects of both very unpredictable. Your body will struggle to cope if you swamp it with too many substances and if it can't flush them out they can rise to dangerous levels.

Alcohol and cocaine used together produce a third toxic substance called cocaethylene, which can increase the chance of seizures, heart attacks and strokes, even in healthy young people. It has also been linked to an increased risk of violence and impulsive and reckless behaviour.

Alcohol dehydrates you so mixing it with other drugs that do the same, like cocaine, ecstasy or mephedrone, or some of the newer drugs (formerly legal highs, can be very risky.

## VIOLENCE

Alcohol affects the brain in a way which reduces our ability to think straight.

It makes us more likely to misread the signs, someone bumping into you or the 'dirty look' can be seen as an act of aggression, when normally you wouldn't even notice it.

The more you drink the more frustrated you can become as you try to get to the bar or queue to use the toilet, this can lead to aggression and violence.

If you are someone who loses their temper easily try not to get too drunk. Drink in pubs and clubs that are not so busy and avoid trouble hot-spots where you know there are always kick-offs. If you are on the receiving end of someone giving you grief just walk away. It can be hard to lose face in front of other people, but it has got to be better than being the victim of a serious assault or being locked up for giving someone else a hiding.

## **SEX**

Alcohol increases your self confidence and makes it easier to approach someone you fancy, but if you're too drunk you can end up going further than you intended.

### **Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's)**

If you intend to have sex, use a condom. Having sex without a condom can leave you open to sexually transmitted infections (STI's) and unplanned pregnancies.

Women can get oral emergency contraception from their GP, Brook, or NHS Walk in-centre. This can be taken 72 hours after unprotected sex and is available to anyone over 16 years of age.

### **Brewers droop**

Alcohol affects the part of the brain that send the messages to your dick to get ready for action, alcohol suppresses the signals and can lead to brewers droop.

## **DON'T FLASH YOUR VALUABLES**

Don't flash your expensive phone around, it could end up being stolen. Buy a cheap phone to use when you are going out. If you are drawing cash from a machine be aware of

who is around and don't let anyone distract you, shield your pin and put your money away quickly. Where possible, use a machine in a well lit public area.

## **KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR DRINK**

Never accept drinks from a stranger or someone you don't trust. These could be spiked.

## **LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF AND YOUR MATES**

If you or one of your friends are going to leave the club or pub with someone you have just met, make sure your friends know what you are up to and where you are going, maybe you could take a pic of your new friend and text it to your friends. If a friend is telling you where they are going and who with, listen to what they are saying.

### **Feeling unwell**

If someone goes too far and starts to feel unwell, take them somewhere quiet and cool. Keep them sitting up and awake, give them water if they're able to drink. If you are unable to wake them and their breathing is erratic, lie them on their side in the recovery position and get medical help.

## **GETTING HOME SAFELY**

Have a plan of how you are going to get home after a night out.

Try to pre-book and pay for a taxi to take you home from a pre-arranged location. Use this location as a meeting point if you get split up from your friends.

If you do end up walking home alone, be aware of your surroundings, stay on well-lit public roads, don't be tempted to take the short cut across the dark, deserted park because you can't wait to crash into bed.

# CUT DOWN

How often do you say to yourself 'I am never getting that drunk again?' These tips will help you keep that promise during your next night out.

## > Set yourself a limit

Decide how much you are going to drink and only carry enough money for that number of drinks and your taxi or bus fare home.

## > Eat something before you go out

Having some food in your stomach before you start drinking will help your body release the alcohol at a steady pace. While you are out have some bar snacks or maybe eat the kebab half way through the night rather than at the end.

## > Mix your drinks

Mix your drinks with soft drinks. Have a shandy or mix your wine with soda or lemonade. Or alternate between alcoholic and soft drinks.

## > Miss a round

You don't have to get a drink in every round. When it is your turn to get the round miss yourself out. Or simply say no and stick to it.

## > Go for lower alcoholic drinks

Some premium lagers, beers and ciders can have almost twice the alcohol content as the normal alternatives.

## > Drink slower

Sip your drink, and put it down on a table and do something else. Standing with your drink in your hand means you will end up drinking it quicker.

## LONG TERM CHANGE

Regular heavy drinking sessions can become a habit. If you need to make long term changes the following advice will help.

### Are you drinking too much?

Have a look at this list and see if any of the warning signs apply to you.

- > Drinking larger amounts to get the same effect.
- > Drinking more than nine units in one session, that's roughly equivalent to five pints or 9 shorts or nearly a full bottle of wine.
- > Have you started doing things you normally wouldn't do (e.g. missing work or college, letting people down)?
- > Do friends and family have a go at you about the amount you drink?
- > Have you got into bother, or injured yourself or others after drinking?

If one of these applies to you then you might want to cut-down your drinking. If three or more of these apply to you then you may need help or support before you start to cut down or stop drinking. You can find more help on the back page of this booklet.

## Think about how will you benefit from cutting down on drinking

There are lots of benefits to cutting back on the drinking sessions and for everyone they will be different.

Some benefits might be:

- > Feeling less tired
- > Losing weight
- > Having more money to spend on other things
- > Better relationships with friends and family
- > Healthier and less likely to develop serious health issues

## Plan ahead and set your goals

Are you going to cut-down slowly or stop straight away? Think about how and when you are going to start.

You could make a decision to book your taxi home earlier than normal. Maybe just go to the local rather than going clubbing. Or choose a couple of days to be completely alcohol free.

## Think about difficult situations and how to deal with them

Think of the situations you are in last time you got smashed, who were you with, where were you, how did you feel, what were you doing at the time? Situations that could trigger your drinking could be:

- > The end of a stressful day
- > After work
- > Celebrating at a party or a club
- > Needing to relax
- > Feeling down



## Dealing with difficult situations

### > Stay active

Plan activities for the times you used to spend drinking.

If you are getting bored, stressed, or craving a drink, do something, the feelings will pass.

### > Do something new

Start a new hobby or enrol on a course. It will occupy your mind, stop you getting bored and fill the time you used to spend drinking.

### > Look after yourself

Stick to a healthy diet, try to get as much sleep as you can, drink plenty of water and try to get some exercise, this will help make you feel better.

### > Avoid your friends who drink heavily for a while

Some of your drinking friends can act as a trigger to your drinking sessions.

### > Clear your home of any alcohol

No need to keep temptation within arms length.

## Tell your friends or family what you are about to do

Having support and someone to talk to will make it easier to achieve your goals. You can also get help and support from your local GP, nurse or support service. There are some contact details on the back page.

## Keep going

Don't worry if you don't succeed the first time you try. Don't beat yourself up if this happens, you haven't failed, you have just taken the first step. Try again - it will probably be a bit easier next time.

# Help and Support

If you feel your drinking is getting out of hand, consider talking to someone. Maybe a close friend, parent, teacher or a local support service.

Here are some organisations that can also help you:

## **Drinkline**

Drinkline offers free advice and information for anyone with alcohol problems and support to their family and friends.

Call 0800 917 8282. Mon-Fri 9am-11pm

Drinkline is a confidential service and no names need be given.

## **Talk to Frank**

National drugs awareness site for young people and parents/carers. 24 hrs a day, seven days a week.

Call 0800 77 66 00 (calls are free and confidential)

[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)

## **Addaction**

UK - wide treatment agency, helping individuals, families and communities to manage the effects of drug and alcohol misuse.

[www.addaction.org.uk](http://www.addaction.org.uk)

## **Brook**

Free, confidential advice on sex and contraception for young people under the age of 25 years of age.

Call 0808 802 1234 (calls are free, including mobiles) Mon-Fri 9am-7pm or visit [www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk)

## **The Mix**

The Mix is the UK's leading support service for young people. They can help you take on any challenge you're facing - including drugs and alcohol.

[www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)