



# Live Better Live Longer

ANSWERING ONE  
QUESTION MAY  
JUST CHANGE  
YOUR LIFE

ALCOHOL  
and you

# Answer this one question:

When was the last time you had more than   drinks?

If your answer was within the past 3 months this leaflet may be useful for you look at.



## Do you know how much is too much?

### THERE IS NO COMPLETELY SAFE LIMIT OF DRINKING

This means you **should not drink more than 14 units per week.**



That may sound like a really small amount but these calculations have been worked out by health professionals and experts looking at the impact of alcohol.

### Know your weekly limit in units and measures

-  6X 175ml GLASSES OF 13% ABV WINE
-  6X 568ml PINTS OF 4% ABV BEER
-  5X 568ml PINTS OF 4.5% ABV CIDER
-  10X 35ml MEASURES OF 40% ABV SPIRITS

Remember any decrease helps!



# How much are you drinking on an average week?

INSERT YOUR UNITS BELOW AND TOTAL UP

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	TOTAL

## Some interesting facts

A pint of lager contains as many calories as a slice of pizza

You would have to run for roughly 34 minutes to burn off the calories in half a bottle of 13% red wine

## Should I be worried?

- Do you drink alone when you feel sad?
- Do you ever regret what you do when you've been drinking — like being aggressive?
- Does your drinking worry your family?
- Do you ever drink after telling yourself you won't?
- Do you ever forget what you did when you were drinking?
- Do you get bad headaches or hangovers?

# Anatomy of a hangover.

## Why do we feel so bad when we drink too much?

If you drink too much you run the risk of the dreaded hangover. There are four reasons for this.

### The way the liver deals with alcohol

(Acetaldehyde)

Acetaldehyde, what alcohol is broken down into and is more toxic than the alcohol. The miserable effects of acetaldehyde are headaches, nausea and vomiting. It takes women longer to break down acetaldehyde and their hangovers can be a bit worse.

### Dehydration

Drinking reduces Vasopressin, a hormone from your pituitary gland that prevents your body losing water in urine.

When you drink, your vasopressin levels drop and you pee more. You can lose up to 4 pints of water for every pint of beer you drink. That is why you have a dry mouth, headache (your brain shrinks and pulls on the membrane) fatigue and nausea. When you lose water vital electrolytes go with it like sodium, potassium and magnesium which leave you feeling weak and sick.



### The colour of your drink

Congeners are toxic by-products of fermentation. Darker drinks have more congeners like red wine, whiskey. They will make you feel rough.

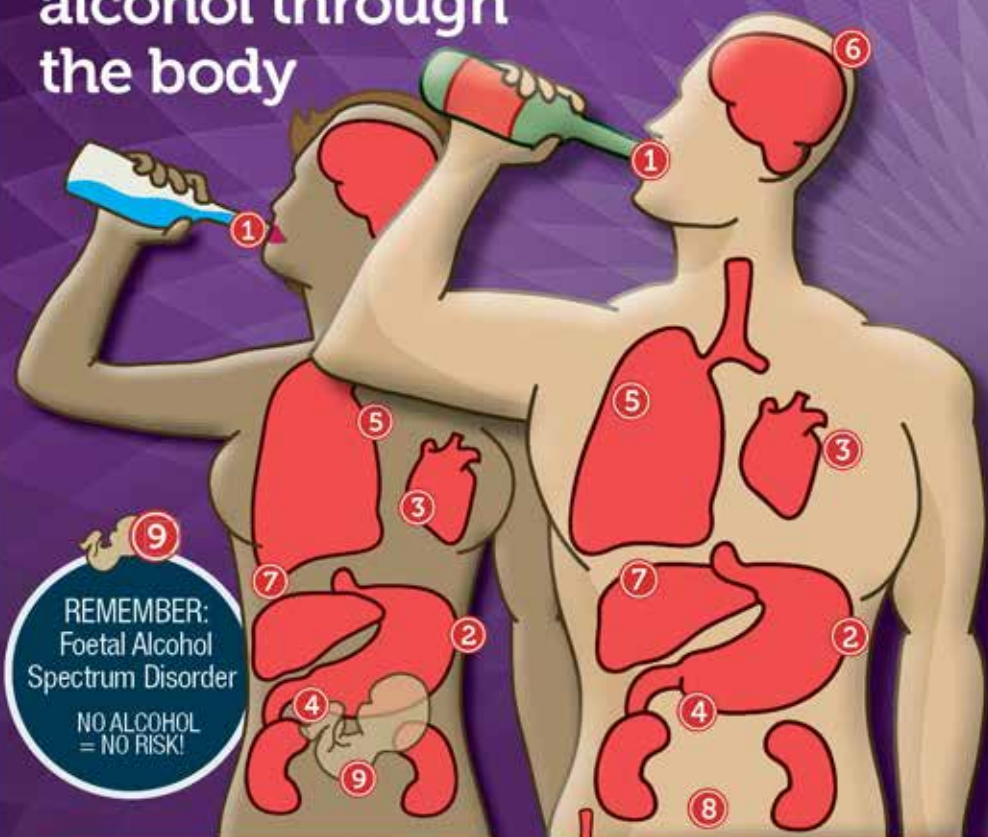
### Chemical Change (Glutamine rebound)

Alcohol suppresses a chemical stimulant called glutamine. When you stop drinking your brain produces more glutamine which prevents you from falling into a deep sleep and can cause tremors, anxiety and restlessness.

*Do any of these affect you?*

*What would you like to avoid?*

# Journey of alcohol through the body



**REMEMBER:**  
Foetal Alcohol  
Spectrum Disorder

**NO ALCOHOL  
= NO RISK!**



**1 MOUTH:** Heavy drinkers increase their chances of developing mouth, oesophagus or throat cancer



**5 LUNGS:** Alcohol increases the risk of aspiration - the entrance of foreign material into the lungs



**2 STOMACH:** Stomach lining irritation can lead to ulcers, increased gastric juice flow causing malnutrition



**6 BRAIN:** Alcohol immediately starts affecting the brain's ability to control behaviour and bodily functions



**3 CIRCULATORY SYSTEM:** Alcohol causes blood vessels to widen resulting in a decrease in blood pressure.



**7 LIVER:** Regular use can lead to liver tissue scarring, liver function and with excessive use can lead to cirrhosis of the liver.



**4 KIDNEYS:** Increased urine production - excessive urination leads to thirst and dehydration



**8 REPRODUCTION:** Impotence (drinkers droop) Alcohol is toxic to the testes which harms sperm development

# INTERESTING ALCOHOL FACTS:

- You would have to run for 68 mins to burn of a bottle of wine
- Alcohol can impact on your sleep, mood and anxiety levels
- People who are aware of the levels that they drink are less likely to develop dependance

## The Alcohol Screening Tool

Ask yourself these questions... Please circle the answer that best applies to you and then add the totals in the end column.

Questions	0	1	2	3	4	Total
<b>MEN:</b> How often do you have EIGHT or more drinks on one occasion? <b>WOMEN:</b> How often do you have SIX or more drinks on one occasion?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	W eekly	Daily or almost daily	
How often during the last year have you been unable to remember what happened the night before because you had been drinking?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	W eekly	Daily or almost daily	
How often during the last year have you failed to do what was normally expected of you because of drinking?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	W eekly	Daily or almost daily	
In the last year has a relative, friend or a doctor or other health worker been concerned about your drinking or suggested you cut down?	Never		Yes, on one occasion		Yes, on more than one occasion	
<b>See if you like the answer...</b>					<b>TOTAL</b>	

0 - 2

Your consumption of alcohol is low risk for developing alcohol related health problems or social problems, relationship problems, violence, anti-social behaviour etc.

3+

This score increases the likelihood that you might develop health related and/or social problems. You are at risk of experiencing alcohol related harm or may have already done so. The higher your score, the higher the chances are that you are dependent on alcohol.



# Tips on cutting down on alcohol

## #1 MAKE A PLAN

Watch how much you drink, set a limit and count your units when you have a drink.

## #2 SET A BUDGET

Leave your cards at home, that way you can't drink more than your budget allows.

## #3 BEWARE OF ROUNDS

Don't be afraid to opt out of a round - this way you can pace yourself.

## #4 MAKE IT A SMALLER ONE

Go for smaller sizes, try bottled beer instead of pints or a small glass of wine instead of a large one. Swap for lower ABV in % - You'll find this info on the bottle.

## #5 HAVE A GOOD MEAL

Eating a good meal slows down the absorption of alcohol and helps you stay in control.

## #6 STAY HYDRATED

Drink a pint of water before you start drinking - don't use alcohol to quench your thirst. Alternate alcoholic drinks with water or soft drinks.

## #7 DE-STRESS DIFFERENTLY

Try not to make alcohol key to winding down after work and try some alternative stress-busters like exercise.

## #8 TAKE A BREAK

Why not try to add two alcohol free days per week?

### Interesting fact

**25% of people in the workplace drink heavily enough to be at risk dependence.**

*What you do with your drinking is up to you.*



## Where can I get support?

There are a wide range of early intervention, treatment and support services in place throughout Northern Ireland.



Visit Drugs and Alcohol NI [www.drugsandalcoholni.info](http://www.drugsandalcoholni.info) and click on the 'Services Near You' section you will find a range of search options to help you find the most appropriate source of support closest to you. It is also worth noting that a number of services can offer advice and one-to-one support to family members regardless of whether the person they care about is ready to get help or not – these services are also featured on the website.



Another useful website is

**ALCOHOL**  
and you

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

which features a range of online information on alcohol as well as a number of alcohol tools within their 'Resources' section. It's main feature is the online alcohol self help course that can let you help yourself at your own pace with a drinks diary, unit checker and more.

You can of course also speak to your GP, or any other healthcare professional, who will be able to offer you information and advice and who may also signpost or refer you on to relevant services for more intensive support.

**In Crisis? Lifeline**

24/7 CRISIS RESPONSE HELPLINE  
**0808 808 8000**

**HSC** Public Health  
Agency

Project supported by the PHA

**NI Dacts**  
DRUG & ALCOHOL

"Addressing drugs and  
alcohol together"

**ALCOHOL**  
and you

"Working together to reduce  
alcohol related harm"

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