

(booze, piss, grog, drink, sauce)

Alcohol can loosen up social situations, and make you the life and soul of the party. It can be legally purchased by people over 18 and is cheap compared to some drugs. Just because alcohol is readily available and accessible doesn't mean it's harmless. Alcohol can wreak havoc on your body, your mind and your life.

Alcohol is absorbed directly into the bloodstream through the stomach and small intestine. Food in the stomach slows down absorption, while caffeinated drinks are believed to increase it.

Once absorbed, it can lead to drunkenness and drunken behaviour, e.g. slurred speech, inability to walk straight and dangerous driving. The higher the concentration of alcohol in the drink, the faster you become intoxicated.

The liver is the primary organ involved in the break down of alcohol in the body

As a rough guide it takes about an hour for the body to process the alcohol contained in one can of beer, but this depends on factors like your size, gender, liver function, genetic makeup and general health.

Studies suggest about eight per cent of the population have severe drinking problems, and more than a quarter exceed recommended drinking guidelines (see over page).

## Drinking - signs of intoxication:

- Intensified moods e.g. very happy, very sad, aggressive.
- Over-friendly, over-affectionate behaviour.
- Euphoria, over confidence.
- Loss of inhibitions and good judgement.
- Increased sexual behaviour, although decreased performance.
- Confusion, dizziness.
- Less aware of physical pain, if at all
- Loss of balance, vomiting.

## Possible short term harm if used above recommended guidelines

- Accidents
- Alcohol related motor vehicle crashes
- Unwanted pregnancy
- Impact on work performance
- Relationship problems
- Weight gain (alcohol has a high sugar content)
- Health issues - e.g. sexual difficulties, stomach problems

## Long-term harm includes:

- Emotional, social and financial problems.
- Injuries from recurrent falls and other accidents.
- High blood pressure.
- Stomach ulcers.
- A decrease in male sperm count.
- Anaemia and general sickness.
- Cirrhosis of the liver
- Reduction in brain mass.
- Premature death from medical problems.

## To reduce harm

- No use is the safest choice.
- Set a limit before going out, and keep track of what you've drunk. Sip drinks, don't guzzle.
- Be prepared to say no to drinks.
- Eat a balanced meal before drinking
- Alternate alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks
- Drink water to quench thirst.
- Avoid drinking games.
- To prevent spiking, don't leave your drinks unattended.
- Be cautious about drinking if you have medical conditions such as diabetes, epilepsy or asthma, or if you're on medication (check with your doctor).

## Alcohol, continued

### To reduce harm contd.

- Don't drink if you're planning to fall pregnant.
- Don't mix drink with drugs, especially GHB, Benzos and Opioids.
- Remember that caffeine based energy drinks DO NOT sober you up! (Guarana is caffeine).

After heavy drinking, most people suffer hangovers which can involve headaches, dry mouth, trembling, vomiting, depressed mood, diarrhoea, tiredness and muscle aches.

## Recommended Drinking Guidelines



On any one DAY drink no more than:

- **2- 4 Standard Drinks**

In any one WEEK, drink no more than:

- **14 Standard drinks**



On any one DAY drink no more than:

- **4-6 Standard Drinks**

In any one WEEK, drink no more than:



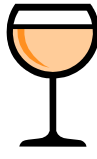

- **21 Standard drinks**

\*Figures vary in range depending on the percentage of the alcohol the person drinks, or if the person is having alcohol free days, for example, if the person is drinking daily, then a daily limit of no more than 4 for men or 2 for women is suggested.

Please note that these drinking guidelines DO NOT relate to driving.

After drinking these amounts you could easily be over the limit to drive safely.

## Standard Drinks Conversion Guide

APPROX.  <b>Standard</b> <b>Drinks</b> 10 grams of alcohol in each standard drink	<b>30 ml</b> <b>straight spirit</b> (a "nip") 	<b>100ml glass</b> <b>of table wine</b> 	<b>300ml glass of</b> <b>beer @ 4%</b> 
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We recommend that you contact the Community Alcohol and Drug Services (CADS). CADS are a free, confidential service to support people to make informed choices, and reduce the risks of their alcohol and other drug use. Contact them on 845 1818 or [www.cads.org.nz](http://www.cads.org.nz).