



Alcohol and your health

How much is too much?

Most people seem to understand how much alcohol they can drink to remain under the legal limits for driving, but many don't know about how much alcohol they can drink before it could be harmful to their health.

While there is no safe level of drinking, the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) guidelines can help you make informed decisions about drinking and reducing the risk of harm.

- **Guideline 1:** No more than two standard drinks per day to reduce the risk of long-term harm.
- **Guideline 2:** No more than four drinks on any one occasion (for example, at a party) to avoid injuring yourself or others.
- **Guideline 3:** People under 18 should not drink alcohol.
- **Guideline 4:** Pregnant and breastfeeding women should not drink alcohol.

For more information about the national guidelines on alcohol visit nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ds10

What is a standard drink?

A standard drink contains 10 grams of pure alcohol. Each of the drinks pictured equals approximately one standard drink. It is important to remember that most drinks are not served as a 'standard drink'.

If you're unsure how many standard drinks your beverage contains, check on the label or ask the bar tender. If you're at someone's house, pour your own drinks.

The average glass of wine at a bar or restaurant contains 1.5 standard drinks. The line on the glass usually doesn't indicate a standard drink, rather the bar or restaurant's standard pour.

Some tips for low-risk drinking

- **Set limits for yourself and stick to them.** Don't let other people pressure you into drinking more than you want.
- **Drink slowly.** Take sips, not gulps.
- **Drink from a small glass.** Some wine glasses can hold several standard drinks.
- **Be aware of exactly what you are drinking.** Remember that 'alcopops' (ready-to-drink or pre-mixed spirits or wine) can be quite strong, even though they don't taste like strong alcohol.
- **Try a low-alcohol or non-alcoholic alternative.**
- **Eat before and while drinking but avoid salty snacks,** which can make you thirsty.
- **Avoid getting into 'rounds' or 'shouts.'** They are likely to make you drink more than you would otherwise drink.
- **Avoid 'top ups.'** Drink one drink at a time so it's easier to keep track of how much you are drinking.



1 pot/middy/handle of full strength beer 285 ml (4.8% alcohol)



1 small glass of wine 100 ml (12.5% alcohol)



1 "nip" of spirits 30 ml (40.0% alcohol)



1/3 of a 275 ml bottle of ready-to-drink spirits/wine (7.0% alcohol)

Binge drinking

The term 'binge drinking' generally refers to drinking heavily over a short period of time with the intention of getting drunk, resulting in immediate and severe intoxication. Binge drinking can be harmful in a number of ways:

- **Short-term harms:** hangovers, memory loss, injury through accidents or assault. There is also the risk of alcohol poisoning, which can cause death.
- **Behaviour-based risks:** falls, assaults, car accidents and financial losses through spending while intoxicated, or loss of income through time off work. Alcohol can also continue to affect you the following day. Hangovers can significantly increase lapses in attention and can impair your ability to work or drive.
- **Long-term harms:** becoming dependent on alcohol, and developing liver or brain damage.

Drinking while pregnant or breastfeeding

The safest choice for women who are pregnant, planning a pregnancy, or breastfeeding is not to drink. Alcohol, like many drugs, can cross the placenta and affect an unborn baby. Two of the most common complications of alcohol use during pregnancy are premature labour and small birth size. Babies born prematurely or with a low birth weight have a higher risk of illness and may experience a number of problems. Talk to your midwife or doctor about your alcohol use as early as possible in your pregnancy and seek advice to help you to safely stop drinking.

Something for men to consider

Heavy alcohol consumption can sometimes cause male fertility problems, as well as a decreased sex drive and performance.

If you are concerned about how much alcohol you're drinking or any health effects related to alcohol, see your GP at the first available opportunity.

Other services include:

NSW Alcohol and Drug Information Service

A confidential information, advice and referral telephone service that provides education, information, support, crisis counselling and referral to services in NSW.

svhs.org.au/home/our-services/list-of-services/alcohol-and-drug-service/alcohol-and-drug-information-service

Tel. **02 9361 8000** (Sydney)

Tel. **1800 422 599** (Regional)

24 hours, 7 days a week

Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service

The Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service is a free, confidential telephone service to help people make lifestyle changes in relation to healthy eating, being physically active, reducing harmful alcohol consumption and achieving and maintaining a healthy weight. It also offers coaching and materials specific to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island communities.

gethealthynsw.com.au | Phone **1300 806 258**

Counselling Online

A free and confidential online alcohol and other drug counselling service is provided at:

counsellingonline.org.au

24 hours, 7 days a week

1300 DRIVER (1300 374 837)

1300 DRIVER is a service for long haul truck drivers and their families. **1300 DRIVER** offers education, information, one-off and ongoing support and referrals for long haul drivers, related to alcohol, tobacco, drugs and health and lifestyle issues affecting them, via 24/7 telephone, website, and Twitter.

1300 DRIVER 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

yourroom.com.au/helplines/truckieshelp/

For more details visit gethealthyatwork.com.au

