

Useful Facts about Alcohol

Information Provided by City Safe

A lot of people like a drink and the weekend wouldn't be the same without letting your hair down, would it? However, it is important to know what you can do to help prevent the 'morning after the night before' and some of the longer-lasting problems that can occur.

Alcohol is measured in UNITS but do you actually know what is safe? How many units are in a drink? Or the harm you may be doing to yourself?

Men are advised to stay within 3 to 4 units a day. **Women** are advised to stay within 2 to 3 units a day.

But one drink isn't one unit! Have a look at the chart below:

Lager	
1 pint of Stella	3 units
1 pint of Fosters	2.3 units
Cider	
1 pint of Strongbow	2.6 units
Wine	
250ml glass red or white wine	3 units
750ml bottle of wine	9 units
Alcopops	
275ml Bacardi Breezer	1.4 units
275ml Smirnoff Ice	
Spirits	
Double Vodka	2.8 units
Single Jack Daniels	1.4 units

Are You a Binge Drinker?

A binge drinker will be drinking at least double the recommended guidelines. Binge drinkers are more likely to experience harm as a result of their drinking than most people. This means that they are more likely to have accidents, social and psychological problems and have a higher risk of developing tolerance to alcohol.

With time and regular use, this person drinks more alcohol than they used to so as to reach the same effect. They may not have experienced harm so far and if they are able

to cut down, they can avoid serious problems in the future.

Are You a Chronic Drinker?

A chronic drinker is a regular drinker. It is likely that their physical and mental health is already suffering as a consequence of their drinking, and they may have experienced problems at home or at work. They may be drinking more alcohol than they used to so as to reach the same effect. They may not describe themselves as alcohol dependent but they are at a high risk of developing alcohol dependency in the future.

If they are able to cut down, they can avoid problems developing or getting worse. If this person finds it difficult to cut down or feels unwell when suddenly stopping drinking, they should see their GP.

In a weight conscious society do you know the facts about alcohol? A night out can have more effects on your waistline than the odd chocolate bar!

Have a look at these examples:

4 pints of Stella	880 calories
1 Alcopop	1 regular fries
7 Bacardi Breezers	1400 calories
1 large glass of wine	1 doughnut
2.5 pints of Guinness	1 kebab
7 shots of Tequila	1 slice of cheese pizza

So if you were to hit the town and drink 7 Breezers that would be the equivalent of 3 Big Macs, 10 slices of cheese pizza or 5 Mars bars.

What happens to alcohol in your body?

The alcohol in your drink is absorbed into your body through the stomach and small intestine. Food slows down the rate of absorption - that's why alcohol affects you more quickly on an empty stomach.

From here, it's distributed via the bloodstream throughout the body, reaching your heart, brain, muscles and other tissues. This happens very quickly - within a few minutes. Usually, though not always, this has a pleasant effect.

Your body can't store alcohol, so it has to get rid of it - mostly via your liver. First, the liver changes alcohol into acetaldehyde - a highly toxic substance. This turns into acetate, a harmless substance, which is passed out in the urine. Some alcohol is also excreted through the breath and sweat.

Your body's ability to process alcohol depends on various things, like your age, weight and sex. Your body breaks down alcohol at a rate of about one unit per hour - and no, there's no way you can speed this up!

Useful Contacts: Drinkline 0800 917 8282

Tips for Safer Drinking

It's great to experience a night out in Manchester with your friends, meet new people, have a laugh and enjoy a few drinks while you are doing it.

Manchester has a wide range of pubs, bars, restaurants, and other entertainment facilities, where you can enjoy all sorts of different environments from family-inclusive restaurants providing world-class food and wine; to some of the UK's top dance venues where you can dance the night away.

The range of alcohol is as extensive as the venues from rare expensive wines to value-for-money beer and spirits. In spite of city centres in the UK having a reputation for drinking to excess, we have found that most people who visit Manchester and choose to drink, do so sensibly.

Nobody likes a hangover. Do you know that dehydration caused by heavy drinking actually affects your brain, which also loses water and shrinks? No wonder you get a headache and feel awful!

Your liver works hard to deal with the drug you are introducing into your system, and takes about an hour to get rid of the effects of just one unit of alcohol. A lot of alcohol means that it too has taken a hammering and is not doing some of the other tasks it needs to do to keep you healthy and feeling well.

The other thing to remember is alcohol is a depressant, and if you feel down when you start to drink, drinking too much is not going to make you feel better. After the initial buzz you may experience from the first one or two drinks- you are likely to feel worse about anything that is getting you down, and not think rationally about it.

After the alcohol you have drunk loosens your tongue, and you tell your friends and anybody else who stands still long enough what you really think about them, you may wish the next day that you had taken it a lot easier.

If you are planning a trip out with your friends, don't drink before you go out. It may seem like a great idea to have a few drinks first so that you can keep the cost down and get in the mood, but home measures tend to be a lot larger than pub measures. You can quite easily slosh a treble measure into your glass without realising it and your two home drinks could easily be six pub-sized drinks.

That amount of alcohol really affects your system, and makes you more likely to drink just as much as ever while you are out- as it also affects your reasoning. You soon forget how much you have really had to drink and are quite happy to accept that extra drink. Result - you become drunk quickly, have a not-so-good night, and need someone to keep an eye on you.

Remember - the more you drink the more vulnerable you become, and the more likely you are to make bad decisions.

A lot more people are taking an interest in how much alcohol they consume, and with good reason. **We know a lot more now about alcohol and its long-term health effects.** Prolonged phases of drinking more than is advised, (women no more than 2-3 units a day, men no more than 4-5 units a day) is now damaging more peoples health.

So finding out what a unit of alcohol means and how many units you normally consume when you go out can be a bit of a shock. Most people don't want to get drunk when they go out; they say it ruins their night, so to prevent this:

1. Pace your drinks.
2. Avoid being in a big round.
3. Have an idea how many units are in what drinks and how many units you are drinking.
4. Try and have some soft drinks, or water throughout the night.
5. Eat before or during a night out, as eating slows alcohol absorption.
6. Think about how you are going to get home before you go out.
7. If you can, avoid caffeinated mixer drinks. Caffeine can speed up alcohol absorption.
8. Avoid people topping up your drinks and don't leave your drink unattended.
9. Look out for your friends and make sure they look out for you.

It will make you feel so much better the next day, and you will have a much better night. You don't have to advertise you are not drinking as much as others in your group if you don't want to- a glass of coke with ice & lemon looks just the same as with its alcohol equivalent. Most bars now also do non-alcoholic cocktails that look and taste good.

Remember, it takes at least an hour to get rid of one unit of alcohol. If you are planning to drive the next day you need to have an idea of how many units you have had before you know when you can drive safely without any alcohol in your bloodstream. Take the test- find out how many units are in your favourite tipples. Then work out when your bloodstream will be clear, it may well be a lot later in the day than you think.

We do still get one or two people who think its fun to get their friends drunk and laugh at them. More seriously there are some who offer to buy relative strangers drinks, and instead of a standard measure get them a very large measure, hoping to get them drunk and persuade them to go with them to an unsupervised area or outside the

premises in the hope of stealing property or committing a sexual act.

They also target people, especially women, who they have noticed have already consumed a lot of alcohol. **Most sexual offences reported to the Police involve people who have consumed large quantities of alcohol.**

Don't accept any drinks from people you don't know, it's not worth it. If your friend has been drinking a lot and is starting to act a bit silly, keep an eye on him/her and make sure they are safe and get home. If someone you don't know approaches you in a bar or club and tries to persuade you to go away from your group and is making you feel suspicious, tell a member of staff.

The other thing to remember is that alcohol and drugs don't mix. Millions of people in the UK at any one time are on prescription drugs, everything from antibiotics to antidepressants. The effects can be dramatic and dangerous, and amongst many possible reactions can cause people to act as if they have been drugged, or cause pain or sickness.

All prescription medicines have information that advises the person it is prescribed to of the recommended dose, potential side effects, and if you can take alcohol with the product. If you are in any doubt contact your pharmacist who will give you advice.

'Recreational' drugs and alcohol also don't mix, and again can have very dangerous side effects. If you are concerned about your own or someone else's drinking, don't forget you can see your GP. Or phone:

0345 697 555 Phone Lines open: 24 hours a day