



## Health & Wellbeing Bulletin

# Alcohol Awareness Bulletin

We are now on the countdown to Christmas with festive parties and seasonal events already in full swing. For those of us who enjoy a drink over the Christmas period you would be wise to take the term “in moderation” to heart. Not only will our bank balances require an overhaul in January, you may also find your general health took a back seat during the festive season.

### What do we know about alcohol?

With the exclusion of tobacco, alcohol is the most widely used drug throughout the world. It is a depressant drug that affects our mood. Taken in small quantities it can help people relax but in larger quantities its temporary effect on the brain results in impaired co-ordination, slurred speech, blurred vision and a loss of balance. Alcohol also affects judgement, one study carried out by the Institute of Alcohol Studies showed that 66% of heavy drinkers wake up the next morning with no recollection of the night before. The medical consequences of prolonged alcohol use are also serious and affect every organ in the body, contributing to many conditions including heart disease and diabetes.

### How many units of alcohol do you drink in a week?

It’s estimated that one in three men and one in five women are drinking over the recommended limits. Drinking too much alcohol can lead to serious health conditions such as liver damage, as well as mental health conditions like anxiety and depression. It is recommended that women can drink two units and men three units of alcohol daily without any long term effects or damage to health. You should also try to have at least two alcohol free days a week to give your liver a rest.

### Recommended Guidelines

It is recommended that women do not exceed 14 units and men do not exceed 21 units of alcohol per week. Men can drink more than women because men have more water in their bodies whereas women have more fat in their body tissue and therefore have a slower absorption rate. However, there’s more to counting units than just the number of drinks you have. The size and strength of your drink can greatly increase its number of units. Here is a guide to the unit content of some common drinks:

- 1 x pint of normal strength beer, 3.5% abv = 2 units
- 1 x 175ml glass of wine, 12 abv = 2 units
- 1 x 25 ml measure of spirits = 1 unit
- 1 x 440ml can of strong lager, 4.5 abv = 3 units

### Problem drinking

Alcohol affects each of us differently, so how do you know if you have a drink problem? If you answer yes to two or more of the following questions, you should try to cut down or seek help.

- Have people annoyed you by criticising your drinking?
- Have you ever felt bad or guilty about your drinking?
- Have you ever had a drink in the morning to get you going?

### Useful Tips for Drinking Sensibly

- Don’t drink on an empty stomach.
- Avoid having lots of different drinks.
- Darker drinks such as whisky, red wines and dark beers have a higher content of chemicals called congeners, which increase the hangover effect.
- Pace yourself with water or a soft drink after every alcoholic drink.
- There is no need to join every round.
- Alcohol dehydrates the body and contributes to a hangover so drink plenty of water before going to bed and again in the morning.
- Make sure you know how you are getting home at the end of a night out.
- Be mindful of the next day as you may still have alcohol in your system. It takes an hour after you drink for your body to start processing the alcohol in your system and at least one hour to eliminate each unit of alcohol
- Find a new way to relax. Rather than using alcohol to help you relax at the end of a day, do something different like having a hot bath, taking a walk or joining a relaxation class.
- Keep in mind that alcohol is full of empty calories - see the alcohol calorie guide for more details.

For further information on QUINN-healthcare’s Health@Work Services please call 1890 907 088 or email och@quinn-healthcare.com

## Alcohol Calorie Guide

| Drink               | Calories |
|---------------------|----------|
| Pint Lager          | 200      |
| Pint Stout          | 170      |
| Pint Cider          | 210      |
| Longneck Cider      | 122      |
| Longneck Alcopop    | 220      |
| Med Glass Wine      | 130      |
| Pub Measure Spirits | 80       |
| Cream Liqueur       | 120      |

**To burn off the calories from 1 pint of Lager, you would need to:**

|                 |             |
|-----------------|-------------|
| Walk for        | 50 mins     |
| Swim for        | 30 mins     |
| Dance for       | 35 mins     |
| Play golf for   | 1hr 20 mins |
| Do aerobics for | 32 mins     |

This calorie guide was produced by the Department of Health & Children