



Binge Drinking

Staying safe
and reducing risk

South Tyneside
Adult Recovery Service

Cookson House, River Drive, South Shields.
Tel. 0191 917 1160

'Binge drinking' usually refers to drinking lots of alcohol in a short space of time, or drinking to get drunk. Researchers commonly define binge drinking as consuming more than eight units of alcohol in a single session - that's just over three pints of 4% strength beer.

What is binge drinking?

There is not an exact definition for binge drinking that applies to everyone, as tolerance to alcohol can vary from person to person and the speed of drinking in a session can also alter alcohol's effects.

Drinking too much, too quickly on a single occasion can increase your risk of:

- accidents resulting in injury, causing death in some cases
- misjudging risky situations
- losing self-control, like having unprotected sex
- leave you vulnerable and impair your ability to make decisions

Health risks

Drinking heavily can increase your risk of some health conditions, including diabetes, heart disease, liver disease and strokes. Alcohol is a contributing factor in up to 60 medical conditions, including several types of cancer.

How to reduce your risk

To reduce your health risk from binge drinking, try to:

- limit how much you drink on any single occasion
- drink more slowly
- drink with food
- alternate with water or non-alcoholic drinks
- plan ahead to avoid problems, such as making sure you can get home safely or having people you trust with you

Staying safe

Keeping track of your drinking is even more important if you are out in risky or unfamiliar circumstances. You can be at risk from others, and may not be able to look after your friends.

You can easily lose control of what you do or say and may make risky decisions, thinking you're invulnerable.

How alcohol affects you drink by drink

Opposite is a drink-by-drink guide, based on a standard (175ml) 12% volume glass of white wine and 4% strength pint of lager, showing how quickly alcohol can affect your mind and body.

One glass of white wine or a pint of lager (approx. two units):

- You're talkative and you feel relaxed.
- Your self-confidence increases.
- Driving ability is already impaired, which is why it's best to drink no alcohol if you're driving.



Two glasses of white wine or two pints of lager (approx. four units):

- Your blood flow increases.
- You feel less inhibited and your attention span is shorter.
- You start dehydrating, one of the causes of a hangover.

Three glasses of white wine or three pints of lager (approx. six units):

- Your reaction time is slower.
- Your liver has to work harder.

Four glasses of white wine or 3.5 pints of lager (approx. eight units):

- You're easily confused.
- You're noticeably emotional.
- Your sex drive could now decrease and you may become less capable.

Some people, including women, young people and those with smaller builds, may experience the effects after drinking smaller amounts of alcohol. If you find you have become tolerant to the effects of alcohol, you may be at risk of health problems.

Getting Help

You should never abruptly stop drinking or rapidly reduce your units.

Instead, seek advice from a GP or healthcare professional to gradually reduce your use of alcohol safely. Or contact South Tyneside Adult Recovery Service on [0191 917 1160](tel:01919171160).

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Accessing the service

We offer a range of free, confidential and non-judgemental services for individuals and their families whose lives are affected by drugs and/or alcohol, and who live within South Tyneside.

Our aim is to support people to stay safe and live happier, healthy lives, free from drugs and alcohol.

