Alcohol

Safe drinking limits
- Alcohol is usually measured in units:
  - ½ pint of standard beer = 1 unit
  - ½ pint of standard lager = 1 unit
  - 1 standard glass of wine = 1 unit
  - ½ pint strong lager = 1 unit
  - 1 measure of spirits = 1 unit
- The Department of Health’s recommended drinking limits are:
  - 3 or 4 units per day for men and
  - 2 or 3 units per day for women

Some facts
- Most of us use alcohol for enjoyment but for some of us it can become a serious problem.
  - Alcohol causes much more harm than illegal drugs like heroin and cannabis.
  - It is a tranquiliser.
  - It is a drug and it is addictive.
  - It helps to cause many physical and mental illnesses.
  - It helps to cause accidents.

If you are concerned about your own or a friend’s drinking, then you should take steps to make changes as soon as possible.
- Keep a record of your drinking
- Accept that there is a problem identify who you are with and when and where you drink
- Find ways to reduce your alcohol consumption and break the habit
- Get support – talk to a friend, or get an appointment to see a counsellor, see your GP or refer yourself to see the mental health adviser (link)
- Attend an anxiety management group

How can I tell if I have a drink problem?
- Always end up drunk
- Use alcohol to escape difficult thoughts and feelings
- Your personality seems to change when you drink
- Casual and or unsafe sex
- A high alcohol tolerance level
- Not remembering what has happened when you have been drinking
- Problems at university or work as a result of drinking
- Concern expressed by family and friends
- Financial problems due to excessive spending on alcohol
- Recurrent severe hangovers, vomiting blood, stomach pains
- Dangerous sexual behaviours when drunk
- Depression
- Frequent arguments with friends and family
• Unconsciousness
• Hearing imaginary voices

What happens when you drink?
The short-term effects of alcohol consumption vary from person to person and can depend on physical build and recent food consumption, however, here is a summary of possible side effects for an average male:
• 1-2 units: an increase in confidence and a decrease in anxiety and social inhibitions
• 2 units: increased risk of accident
• 3 units: increased happiness but significantly reduced judgement
• 5 units: above the legal driving limits. Potential loss of driving license and risk of serious accident.
• 10 units: slurred speech, loss of self-control and possible aggression. Alcohol can impair your judgement and alter your perceptions.
• 12 units: unable to walk in a straight line, memory loss, depressed central nervous system, inflamed stomach lining, diminished sexual arousal and inhibited male erection.
• 18 units: continued drinking will lead to unconsciousness.

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