

Alcohol advice and local support

This information leaflet has been given to you by your doctor or nurse to provide further information and advice about alcohol and where you can get local support.

How much is too much alcohol?

The latest government guidance on alcohol recommends:

- Drinking **any** level of alcohol regularly carries a health risk for anyone. There is no 'safe' level.
- Men and women should not regularly drink more than **14 units of alcohol a week** to keep their risk low.
- Spreading your drinking over three days or more if you drink as much as 14 units a week (do not 'save them up' and drink in one session)
- Introducing several alcohol-free days each week as a good way of cutting down
- You should not drink alcohol at all if you are pregnant
- On a single episode of drinking alcohol you are advised to limit the total amount of alcohol drunk and to drink slowly, with food and alternate with water
- Additionally, it is advised that you should not drink alcohol at all if you have another liver related condition, e.g. viral hepatitis.

Why should I reduce my alcohol intake?

There is strong evidence linking alcohol to liver disease, reduced fertility and sexual function, high blood pressure, strokes and diabetes. There are also strong links between alcohol and increased risk of cancer, e.g. women regularly drinking around 2 large glasses of 13% wine per day increase their risk of breast cancer by 50%. Men regularly drinking around 2 pints of 5.2% lager a day are three times more likely to get cancer of the mouth⁽¹⁾ There are also strong links between depression, anxiety, self-harm, suicide, accidental death (e.g. drowning) and alcohol.

How much is a unit?

A unit of alcohol is a measure of alcohol. How many units there are in a drink depends on the size of the drink and the % ABV (alcohol by volume). The following guide gives an idea of how much a unit is:



References:

1. Alcohol learning centre – 'Your drinking and You'
2. Drinkaware.co.uk

Alcohol self-assessment (AUDIT-C)

The Audit – C (Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test Consumption) is a quick set of 3 questions you can answer to see if you are drinking too much.

| Questions | Scoring system | | | | | Your score |
|--|----------------|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| How often do you have a drink containing alcohol? | Never | Monthly or less | 2 - 4 times per month | 2 - 3 times per week | 4+ times per week | |
| How many units of alcohol do you drink on a typical day when you are drinking? | 1 -2 | 3 - 4 | 5 - 6 | 7 - 9 | 10+ | |
| How often have you had 6 or more units if female, or 8 or more if male, on a single occasion in the last year? | Never | Less than monthly | Monthly | Weekly | Daily or almost daily | |

Scoring: A total of 5+ indicates increasing or higher risk drinking.
If you score 5 or more on the above questionnaire please complete the remaining Audit questions below.

| Questions | Scoring system | | | | | Your score |
|--|----------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|--------|---------------------------|------------|
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| How often during the last year have you found that you were not able to stop drinking once you had started? | Never | Less than monthly | Monthly | Weekly | Daily or almost daily | |
| How often during the last year have you failed to do what was normally expected from you because of your drinking? | Never | Less than monthly | Monthly | Weekly | Daily or almost daily | |
| How often during the last year have you needed an alcoholic drink in the morning to get yourself going after a heavy drinking session? | Never | Less than monthly | Monthly | Weekly | Daily or almost daily | |
| How often during the last year have you had a feeling of guilt or remorse after drinking? | Never | Less than monthly | Monthly | Weekly | Daily or almost daily | |
| How often during the last year have you been unable to remember what happened the night before because you had been drinking? | Never | Less than monthly | Monthly | Weekly | Daily or almost daily | |
| Have you or somebody else been injured as a result of your drinking? | No | | Yes, but not in the last year | | Yes, during the last year | |
| Has a relative or friend, doctor or other health worker been concerned about your drinking or suggested that you cut down? | No | | Yes, but not in the last year | | Yes, during the last year | |

Scoring: Add up your score using the total from the Audit –C plus the total from this set of questions.

0 – 7 Lower risk dependence 8 – 15 Increasing risk 16 – 19 Higher risk 20+ Possible on alcohol

Alcohol dependency

If you score more than 20 on the Audit questionnaire above it is possible that you are dependent on alcohol and you should seek professional advice before you stop drinking alcohol. **It is extremely dangerous to suddenly stop drinking alcohol if you are dependent** as you may have a seizure (fit) and could quickly become very unwell.

Risk Categories

There are three risk categories people who drink alcohol can be divided in to. You can find out which category you fit into by completing the Audit C questionnaire above:

- **Lower-risk drinkers** - are drinking within the recommendations **HOWEVER** drinking alcohol is never risk free
- **Increasing-risk drinkers** - regularly drinking more than 14 units a week. If you fit into this category you need to reassess your relationship with alcohol and try and cut your intake.
- **Higher-risk drinkers** - regularly drinking more than 8 units a day or 50 units a week if you're a man or regularly drinking more than 6 units a day or 35 units a week if you're a woman. People drinking at this level may even be alcohol dependent – professional advice should be sought before stopping drinking.

Getting support in East Sussex

If you feel you have a problem with alcohol or that you may be alcohol dependent please contact one of the following services:

STAR (operated by CGL - Change, Grow, Live – formerly called CRI)

STAR provides professional support to people with drug and alcohol problems in the local area. CGL are a charity commissioned to provide this service to the local population. You can book an appointment or just turn up. You will be allocated a keyworker who will put together a recovery plan with you.

STAR Hastings - Thrift House, 13 Wellington Place, Hastings, TN34 1YN. You can self-refer by calling 0300 30 38160

STAR Eastbourne- Lift House, 6 St Leonards Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN21 3UH. You can self-refer by calling 0300 30 38160

Website: www.changegrowlive.org/content/east-sussex-drug-and-alcohol-recovery-service-star

Support groups and contacts

ESRA - East Sussex Recovery Alliance (ESRA) is a peer led recovery community organisation. ESRA is funded in part by the local council as well as by charitable donations and grants. ESRA organise activities and workshops which are open to anyone with a substance misuse problem, irrespective of substance. They can be contacted on 01424 435318 or 07943 590888 or you can just drop in. They are based at Unit 1, Queens Apartments, Harold Place, Hastings, TN34 1JA and are open Monday - Saturday 9am to 5pm.

SMART (Self-Management and Recovery Training) – This is a peer-led 4 step approach to managing addictive behaviour which focuses on building and maintaining motivation, coping with urges, managing thoughts, feelings and behaviours and living a balanced life. Sessions are run by ESRA at venues across East Sussex. Meetings are open to anyone with a substance

misuse issue, irrespective of substance. Please contact ESRA on 01424 435318 or 07943 590888 for details or visit www.smartrecovery.org.uk

Alcoholic anonymous (AA) - AA is a support group run by others who struggle to cope with alcohol or who have drunk to excess in the past. Meetings are run throughout the country. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. AA membership is free. You can find a local meeting by calling 0800 9177 650, emailing help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk or looking the website www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

- An AA group meets at Eastbourne District General in the Department of Psychiatry every Monday and Friday evening at 8pm. These are both 'open' meetings meaning you can bring a friend or relative with you. Other AA groups are run within the towns of Hastings and Eastbourne, please contact AA for details.

Café North – This is a newly established recovery café based in Eastbourne. It is run by Change, Grow, Live (CGL). It is open for you to drop in for advice and support around drugs and alcohol. It is based at 5 North St, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN21 3HG. SMART sessions and other support groups are run from here. It is open from 9am-5pm Thursday – Saturday and 9am-2.30pm on a Sunday.

Health in Mind – This NHS service offers professional support to people in East Sussex suffering with stress, anxiety and low mood. You can refer yourself to this service. You can fill in a form online at www.healthinmind.org.uk, call 0300 00 30 130 or email spnt.healthinmind@nhs.net

Online resources

There is a lot of information available online about alcohol – some suggested sites include:

- **NHS website Drinking and Alcohol** - www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Alcoholhome.aspx
- **DrinkAware** - www.drinkaware.co.uk
- **Drink Coach App** – Available to download on android and iOS. Set goals; keep a drinks diary plus other useful tools. www.drinkcoach.org.uk
- **Alcohol Concern** - www.alcoholconcern.org.uk
- **Change4Life** - www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/Pages/drink-less-alcohol.aspx

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: (01323) 417400 Ext: 5860 or by email at: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net

Other formats

If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department. Tel: 01424 755255 Ext: 2620. After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

Dr S Ratnarajah – Consultant Gastroenterologist

Dr J Rademaker – Consultant Gastroenterologist

Dr A Dunk – Consultant Gastroenterologist

Dr P Mayhead – Consultant Gastroenterologist

Clare Phillips – Hepatitis Clinical Nurse Specialist

ESRA (East Sussex Recovery Alliance) – Patient Group

The directorate group that have agreed this patient information leaflet: Gastroenterology

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Responsible clinician/author: Clare Phillips – Hepatitis CNS

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