



For further information:

Drugaid

Tel: 0870 060 0310

0870 numbers are more expensive from a mobile. 0870 numbers are cheaper from a landline.

Tel: 02920 868 675

Tel: 01685 721 991

www.drugaidcymru.com



Alcohol

Alcohol

Booze, Bevy

What does it look like?



What is alcohol?

The active drug in alcohol is ethanol. Alcohol is produced by fermenting fruits, vegetables or grain. It is drunk in a variety of different forms. It is absorbed into the bloodstream and the effects start within 5 – 15 minutes. A guideline is we process 1 unit of alcohol per hour.

If drunk in moderation it can be enjoyable. However, drinking too much can lead to serious health and social problems.

Alcohol is acidic and is also used as an antiseptic and a cleaning agent.

What will it do to me?

Alcohol (Ethanol) is a depressant drug which slows down the activity of the body's central nervous system.

It reduces your inhibitions and can make you feel relaxed and talkative. It can cause slurring of speech, impaired judgement and loss of co-ordination. It can also make some people feel aggressive.

The effects depend on the amount of ethanol in a drink, your body size, the amount of food you eat first, your gender, how you metabolise it and whether it is diluted or fizzy.

When does it become a problem?

- Drinking over the recommended weekly units of alcohol for a long period of time can lead to a number of different health problems:
- Alcohol will stop your body being able to absorb vitamins.
- Liver damage can occur – some liver damage such as cirrhosis is irreversible.
- Stomach ulcers and gastric problems.

Drugaid

- Inflammation of the pancreas and intestines.
- Heart problems, high blood pressure and palpitations.
- Brain damage, black outs, memory loss, fits and in extreme case alcohol induced dementia.

Drinking heavily also increases your calorie intake, and it is frequently associated with obesity. A pint of beer is approximately 180 calories. A small glass of wine is about 100 calories.

Alcohol contains the drug ethanol. You can become physically and psychologically dependent on it. Once dependence has been reached you will experience withdrawal symptoms when you stop drinking. These can include:

- shaking or tremors
- a rapid heartbeat
- anxiety
- insomnia
- feeling disorientated
- hallucinations (seeing and/or hearing things that are not there)
- fits and seizures. These can be fatal.

Staying safer

It is recommended that safer drinking is:

- Men – no more than 3-4 units a day with 2 or 3 days a week of not drinking. Women – no more than 2-3 units a day with 2 or 3 days a week of not drinking.
- Avoid alcohol during pregnancy.

1 unit of alcohol is equivalent to:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of average strength beer, cider or lager
- 1 single pub measure of spirits
- 1 small glass of wine
- 1 small glass of sherry

Drinking more than the weekly recommended units of alcohol can cause damage to both the brain and body.

Binge drinking can also cause health and social problems. It puts an extra strain on your liver and can affect your brain. Drinking more than 6 units in one go for women and more than 8 in one go for men is considered a binge.

Avoid mixing alcohol with any other drugs, especially tranquillisers and opiates as risk of overdose increases.

Never leave someone alone who has passed out from drinking.

The Law

The law surrounding alcohol is complex. Here are some important points to remember:

- Only licensed premises can legally sell alcohol within restricted hours.
- It is illegal to give alcohol to a child under 5.
- It is illegal for under 18's to purchase alcohol.
- It is an offence to be drunk in a public place (including licensed premises) or to be drunk and disorderly.
- It is an offence to drive with more than 80mg of alcohol in every 100ml of blood (judgment and co-ordination can be impaired at much lower levels – the safest course is not to drive if you've been drinking).

The most recent restrictions make it an offence to carry or possess alcohol on trains, coaches or mini-buses travelling or from designated sporting events. Additionally there may be local by-laws to observe, such as those forbidding drinking on the streets/public outdoor places.