

REAL LIFE SOLUTIONS



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Avoiding Risky Drinking

Are your drinking habits putting your health and safety at risk? Learn how to recognize when your drinking has become a problem. In many cultures, drinking alcohol is a regular part of socializing and celebrating. However, consuming too much can put your safety and health—even your life—at risk.

Taking a Healthy Approach If you don't already drink, the recommendation from Dietary Guidelines for Americans is not to start. Even though some studies show benefits to moderate drinking, other studies have shown links between moderate alcohol consumption and increased risk of violence, drowning, breast cancer, and injuries from falls and motor vehicle collisions. The recommendation for moderate drinking is:

	Women	Men
Amount	1 drink or less	2 drinks or less
Time Period	Per day	Per day

Defining a Standard Drink A standard drink is usually equal to an average can or bottle of beer, a glass of wine, a shot of distilled liquor, or a one shot cocktail or mixed drink. This definition is based on the percentage of alcohol found in these different drink categories. The percentage of alcohol in drinks can vary so read labels and adjust accordingly.

Too Much, Too Often: High-Risk Drinking

According to the National Institutes of Health, at-risk or heavy drinking for men is more than 4 standard drinks in one day or more than 14 standard drinks in one week. For women it's more than 3 standard drinks in one day or more than 7 standard drinks in one week. This shows how fine the line is between moderate and high-risk drinking and why it's important to track how many drinks you have.

	Women	Men
Amount	4 or more standard drinks	5 or more standard drinks
Time Period	2 hours	2 hours

Alcohol Abuse Alcohol abuse occurs when drinking behavior causes disruption in your life. You may have difficulty with:

- Making it to work on time
- Keeping up with your work or home responsibilities
- Remembering everything that happened when you were drinking
- Recovering from drinking the next day

Alcohol Dependence Alcohol dependence or alcoholism is when you need alcohol to function normally and you have trouble controlling your use of alcohol. Alcoholism is a serious condition and should be dealt with right away. Some characteristics of alcohol dependence are:

- Craving alcohol
- Needing more drinks to get a euphoric feeling or "buzz"
- Having a hard time controlling the number of drinks consumed once you've started drinking
- Having withdrawal symptoms when you try to quit

Reducing Your Risk If you don't drink, don't start. If you do drink, do so in moderation—that's one drink or less per day if you're a woman and two drinks or less per day if you're a man. Depending on certain physical and psychological health conditions, you may still have problems even if you drink within these limits. Consult with a professional if you have any questions about whether or not you should drink.

If you need help, contact your EAP. The EAP can help you and your family members deal with many of life's challenges, including help with work, family, personal matters, and legal and financial issues.

Courtesy of Federal Occupational Health
<http://www.foh.hhs.gov/calendar/alcohol.html>

12 fl oz of regular beer	=	8-9 fl oz of malt liquor (shown in a 12 oz glass)	=	5 fl oz of table wine	=	1.5 fl oz shot of 80-proof spirits ("hard liquor"—whiskey, gin, rum, vodka, tequila, etc.)
						
about 5% alcohol		about 7% alcohol		about 12% alcohol		about 40% alcohol
<small>The percent of "pure" alcohol, expressed here as alcohol by volume (alc/vol), varies by beverage.</small>						

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