

Responsible Drinking

There are guidelines for the maximum amount of alcohol an average adult can drink without risking their health. But adults can't just drink whenever they like - there are times when they shouldn't drink alcohol at all. There are laws which restrict the purchase and consumption of alcohol by young people under the age of 18.

Read the information about responsible drinking and risk groups below, then answer the questions.

How much can adults drink?

In the UK, guidelines for adults who choose to drink alcohol are based on the number of 'units' of alcohol. One UK unit contains 8 grammes of pure alcohol. The UK government recommends that adult men and women don't drink more than 14 units a week. Consistently drinking more than this amount can mean serious health risks.

But there are times when adults should not drink at all.

When should adults drink?

Adults should avoid drinking alcohol:

Before driving (See worksheet 9)

Before

- operating machinery

- working at a height

- doing sports or swimming.

When taking certain drugs and medicines: it's not safe to use some drugs and medicines and drink alcohol (information is usually given on the label of the medicine).

When pregnant: drinking alcohol during pregnancy can harm the developing baby.

Under 18s

Laws regulate purchase and consumption of alcohol by young people under the age of 18. That's because they are less equipped to cope with the effects of alcohol, physically and emotionally. The same amount of alcohol will have a much greater effect on the body of a child or young person than on an adult, because their body is still growing and developing. Also a young person doesn't have the experience needed to deal with the effects of alcohol on judgement and perception.

In the short term, drinking and getting drunk can be dangerous for young people. They may do or say something they regret later, and they're much more likely to have an accident or get into trouble. In the longer term, drinking can affect their school work, social life and friendships as well as their general health. They'll also be trouble if they break the laws about buying and drinking alcohol.

ACTIVITY ONE

Answer these questions in pairs or small groups. There is information to help you in the Fact Zone of our Online Learning Zone talkaboutalcohol.com.

1. Referring to the short term effects of alcohol, explain why adults should not drink alcohol before operating machinery or working at height.
2. Give three examples of 'serious health risks' which may result if an adult regularly drinks more than the maximum recommended by government guidelines.
3. During pregnancy, alcohol crosses the placenta to the foetus and can affect the developing baby. Research and describe what is meant by Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). The following websites may be useful

nhs.uk/livewell/alcohol/pages/alcoholhome.aspx

rcog.org.uk

nofas.org

ACTIVITY TWO

Discuss in pairs or small groups: Why are there NO safe limits for alcohol consumption for under age drinkers