

Top Tips

Alcohol can change how most people act, feel and behave, but because it affects the brain and organs of young people more than adults, they are particularly vulnerable.

We've put together some tips to help older teenagers and young adults stay safer and in control if they choose to drink alcohol.



EAT

Eating before or while drinking means that any alcohol stays in the stomach for longer, giving the liver more of a chance to break it down. On an empty stomach, alcohol rushes into the bloodstream and organs. Eating toast, or a bowl of cereal will do, but a proper meal is best!

HYDRATE

Alcohol is dehydrating, so refreshing alcohol-free drinks make a big difference, especially if you're dancing and using energy! Having a big drink of water when you get back home is a good tip too. If you play a lot of sport, be mindful of the effects of alcohol on your performance.

PACE

One great way to enjoy a better night out while saving money is to alternate alcoholic drinks with alcohol-free ones or water. Avoiding drinking too much too quickly also really helps, as this stops alcohol from rushing into the bloodstream and toxins from building up. All bars and clubs have to offer free tap water, so don't be afraid to ask.





GOOD MATES

Look out for each other – watch each other's drinks to reduce drink spiking risk, look after anyone who has drunk too much and make sure they get home safely as well. Drink spiking is on the increase, and not always by strangers. 1 in 3 students say they have had their drink spiked, according to a recent student survey.

PLAN

Working out a plan on how to get home before heading out is a wise move, such as arranging a lift with a non-drinking mate, booking a cab and keeping enough money aside, or checking public transport times. For anyone walking home, avoiding unlit or unsafe areas and not walking alone are key to arriving back safely. Charging your phone fully before going out and always letting someone know where you are going, and who with, is also important. Recent polls show that over 30% of students have taken risks after a night out either by going home on their own or with a stranger. Don't risk it!

DON'T MIX

Combining alcohol with other drugs, prescription or illegal, can be very dangerous. For example, alcohol is a depressant, so it slows down the nervous system, as does cannabis. Their combined effects can interact and cause more negative consequences when taken together, increasing the depressant effects of both. Judgement, reaction time and coordination are affected more.

Cannabis affects basic control functions in the brain, such as nausea and vomiting, and can suppress the body's response to vomit after drinking too much. This could mean an increased risk of alcohol poisoning.

If driving, all it takes is 40 mg of alcohol per 100 ml of blood (a blood alcohol content of 0.04) and a single joint to feel the effects equivalent to a blood alcohol content of over 0.08 i.e. the illegal limit for driving.

88% of young people in treatment for addiction are there for cannabis, more than all other substances put together.

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

The amount of alcohol in different drinks can vary a lot, so check the back label to find the alcohol content of your drink. Beers and ciders mainly range between 0 and 9% and wines from 0 to 14%. Each shot of vodka is a unit, the same as a half pint of 4% beer and there are up to 28 units in a 70cl bottle of spirits, the same as three bottles of wine.



If making self-served drinks like cocktails, they'll often be stronger than bought ones, so a good tip is to use a measure, have a long mixer and plenty of ice. Also, watch out for 'top ups' – anyone can kid themselves that they're still on the same drink – finishing a glass first before having another drink helps.

You can access a unit calculator that adds up your drinks and calories at drinkaware.co.uk/understand-your-drinking/unit-calculator. There are also apps to download that help track how much you drink.

Find out more at talkaboutalcohol.com

HOW MANY UNITS IN A DRINK?

Water or a soft drink



= 0 units

Small alcopop or 1/2 pint of beer



= 1 unit

A pint of beer or a medium glass of wine (175ml)



= 2 units

A large glass of wine (250ml) or a can of strong lager



= 3 units

EXCUSES

There's a great range of low and no alcohol drinks available now from shops, pubs and bars for anyone who doesn't want to drink alcohol or for those who feel they've had enough. No one can tell the difference.

If someone wants to go out but not drink, they could also offer to be the designated driver.

