

UK CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICERS' GUIDELINES ON LOW RISK LEVELS OF DRINKING 2016

NB: Elements of this guidance are open for consultation until the 1st April 2016 via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/health-risks-from-alcohol-new-guidelines>

Regular drinking

The Chief Medical Officers' guidelines are now the same for both men and women:

o You are safest not to regularly drink more than 14 units per week.

This advice is for adults and is based on the evidence that if people did drink regularly at or above the low risk level advised, overall any protective effect from alcohol on deaths is overridden, and the risk of dying from an alcohol-related condition would be expected to be around, or a little under, 1% over a lifetime.

WHAT DOES 14 UNITS LOOK LIKE?

<p>A pint of beer, lager or cider at 4% abv (2.3 units)</p> x 6	<p>A 330ml bottle of beer, lager or cider at 5% (1.7 units)</p> x 8	
<p>A 50ml measure (double) of spirits at 40% abv (2.0 units)</p> x 7	<p>A 125ml glass of sparkling wine at 11% (1.4 units)</p> x 10	
<p>A 175ml glass of wine @ 12% abv (2.1 units)</p> x 6		

o If you do drink as much as 14 units per week, it is best to spread this evenly over 3 days or more.

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- o Heavy drinking sessions increase your risks of death from long term illnesses and from accidents and injuries.
- o A good way to cut down is to have several drink-free days each week.

Single drinking episodes

To keep short term health risks from single drinking occasions to a low level, men and women can:

- o limit the total amount of alcohol consumed on any occasion;
- o drink more slowly, with food, and alternating with water;
- o avoid risky places and activities, making sure there are people you know around, and ensuring you can get home safely.

Some groups of people are likely to be affected more by alcohol and should be more careful of their level of drinking on any one occasion:

- o young adults
- o older people
- o those with low body weight
- o those with other health problems
- o those on medicines or other drugs.

Pregnancy

- o If you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, the safest approach is not to drink alcohol at all, to keep risks to your baby to a minimum.
- o Drinking in pregnancy can lead to long-term harm to the baby, with the more you drink the greater the risk.



Most women either do not drink alcohol (19%) or stop drinking during pregnancy (40%).

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/489796/CMO_alcohol_guidelines.pdf

The above guidelines are for adults, the current advice from the CMO for those under 18 is:

- (1) Children and their parents and carers are advised that an alcohol-free childhood is the healthiest and best option. However, if children drink alcohol, it should not be until at least the age of 15 years.
- (2) If 15 to 17 year olds do consume alcohol, they should do so infrequently and should never exceed 3 to 4 units (male) or 2 to 3 units (female) and, on days when they drink, consumption should usually be below such levels.
- (3) Parents and young people should be aware that drinking, even at age 15 or older, can be hazardous to health and that not drinking is the healthiest option for young people.