

Alcohol AND YOUR HEALTH

How much is too much?

While there is no safe level of drinking, alcohol consumption at harmful levels can cause unwanted effects such as:



Injury



Liver or
brain damage



Heart
disease



Some
cancers



Weight
gain



High blood
pressure

Many don't know about how much alcohol they can drink before it could be harmful to their health.

The National Health and Medical Research Council's guidelines can help you make informed decisions about drinking and reducing the risk of harm.

Guidelines to reduce your risk of alcohol-related harm over a lifetime

- To reduce the risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury for healthy men and women, drink no more than 10 standard drinks per week and no more than 4 standard drinks on any one day.
- The less you choose to drink, the lower your risk of alcohol-related harm. For some people, not drinking at all is the safest option.

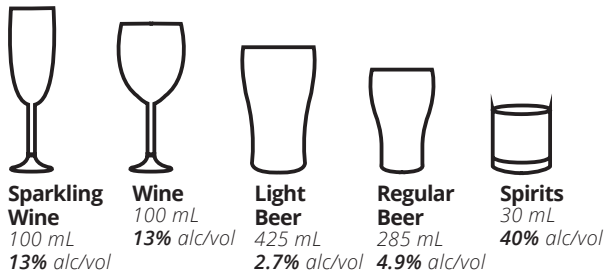
i For more information about the national guidelines on alcohol visit nhmrc.gov.au

**Do you know
how much alcohol
is harmful to
your health?**

What is a standard drink?

A standard drink contains 10 grams of alcohol.

Each of the drinks pictured here equals approximately one standard drink.



It is important to remember that a serving of alcohol in a pub or restaurant is often more than a 'standard drink'.

For example, a glass of wine at a bar contains 1.5 standard drinks. The line on the glass usually doesn't indicate a standard drink, rather the bar or restaurant's standard pour.

Some tips for low-risk drinking

- **Set limits for yourself and stick to them.** Don't let other people pressure you into drinking more than you want.
- **Drink slowly.** Take sips, not gulps.
- **Drink from a small glass.** Some wine glasses can hold several standard drinks.
- **Be aware of exactly what you are drinking.** Remember that 'alcopops' (ready-to-drink or pre-mixed spirits or wine) can be quite strong, even though they don't taste like strong alcohol.
- **Try a low-alcohol or non-alcoholic alternative.**
- **Eat before and while drinking** but avoid salty snacks, which can make you thirsty.
- **Avoid getting into 'rounds' or 'shouts'.** They are likely to make you drink more than you would otherwise drink.
- **Avoid 'top ups'.** Drink one drink at a time so it's easier to keep track of how much you are drinking.

Binge drinking

Drinking heavily over a short period of time with the intention of getting drunk, resulting in immediate and severe intoxication can be harmful in a number of ways:

- **Short-term harms:** hangovers, memory loss, injury through accidents or assault. There is also the risk of alcohol poisoning, which can cause death.
- **Behaviour-based risks:** falls, assaults, car accidents and financial losses through spending while intoxicated, or loss of income through time off work. Alcohol can also continue to affect you the following day. Hangovers can significantly increase lapses in attention and can impair your ability to work or drive.
- **Long-term harms:** becoming dependent on alcohol, and developing liver or brain damage.

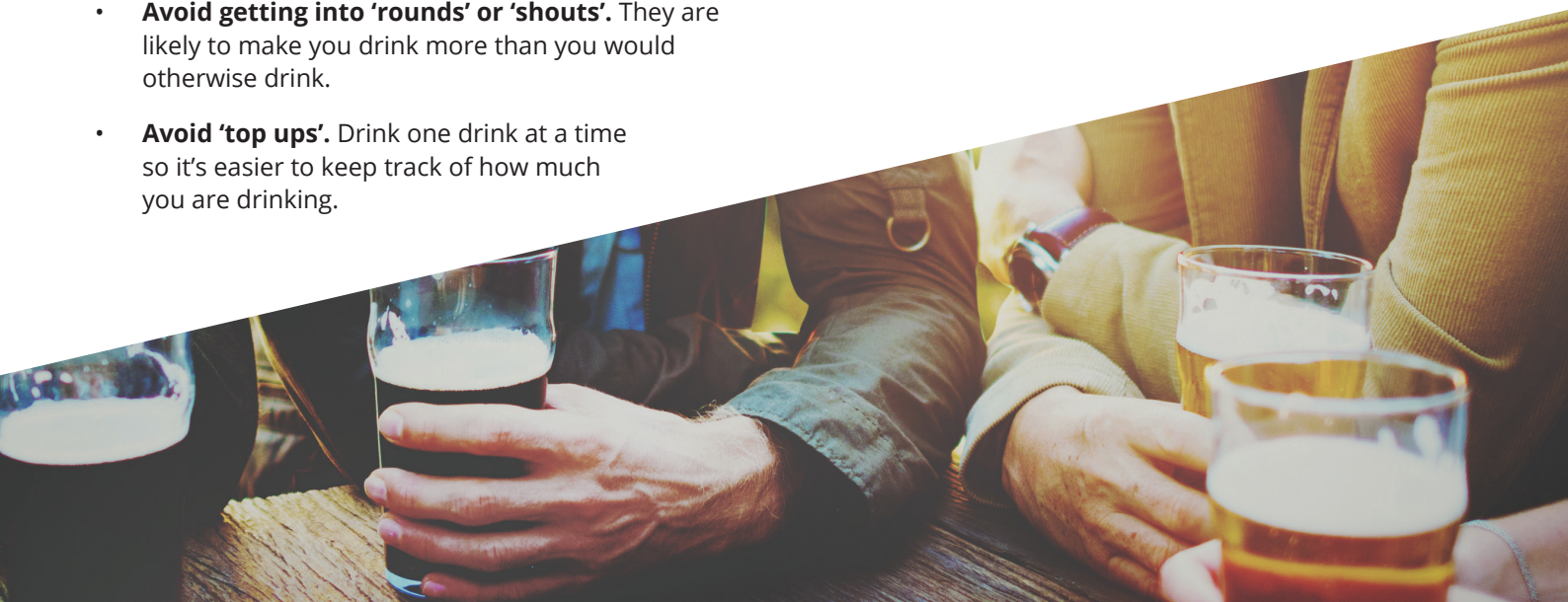
Drinking while pregnant or breastfeeding

The safest choice for women who are pregnant, planning a pregnancy, or breastfeeding is not to drink. Alcohol can cross the placenta and affect an unborn baby. Two of the most common complications of alcohol use during pregnancy are premature labour and small birth size.

Babies born prematurely or with a low birth weight have a higher risk of illness and may experience a number of problems. Talk to your midwife or doctor about your alcohol use as early as possible in your pregnancy and seek advice to help you to safely stop drinking.

Something for men to consider

Heavy alcohol consumption can sometimes cause male fertility problems, as well as a decreased sex drive and performance.





ALCOHOL CULTURE AT WORK

Why address alcohol at work?

While many organisations do not provide alcohol during the typical working day, it is important that everyone takes responsibility for changing the alcohol culture across Australia. With 31% of adults in NSW drinking at levels harmful to their health, the workplace is an ideal setting to promote and support moderate drinking or to create an alcohol-free environment. Organisations can play an important role in supporting workers to reduce their current levels of drinking.

Where to begin?

There is a range of actions that an organisation can implement to reduce the impact of alcohol on the health of workers.

You can start your workplace action plan to address alcohol at the *Get Healthy at Work* website.

i Visit gethealthyatwork.com.au

Here are some things to consider when trying to change the alcohol culture of your workplace:

Policy

An effective alcohol policy provides and promotes actions that will assist in addressing alcohol in the workplace. An alcohol policy should be tailored to meet the specific needs of your organisation. For example, an organisation may choose to develop a policy that promotes an alcohol-free workplace, or discourage gifting alcohol or using alcohol as an incentive.

Communication

It's important that workers are aware of the expectations of their organisation when it comes to alcohol. Even though your organisation may have policies and procedures in place, if workers aren't aware of them, they can't follow them.

Education and awareness training

Alcohol awareness and education programs can contribute to the overall health and wellbeing of workers. The provision of regular, ongoing and adaptable education plays a central role in supporting cultural and behavioural change. Successful education programs adopt a 'whole of organisation' approach and are complimented by other actions.

The most important aspect of your training should be communicating your organisation's position on alcohol.

Event management

Events and social occasions are high-risk occasions for every organisation. A work function is an important way for organisations to thank workers or to celebrate an event such as the end of year or some other special occasion. A successful function is not only enjoyable for everyone involved, but is also incident-free, with all guests returning home safely. It's important to make sure you are protecting and promoting your company's image and expected behaviour before, during and after the event.

Free alcohol support and treatment

There are a number of free alcohol support and treatment services on offer across NSW. These services are available to support individuals, family and friends of someone with a substance problem, or to help the workplace understand how they can support a worker with an alcohol problem. See below for more information on the support resources and services on offer.

If you are concerned about how much alcohol you're drinking or any health effects related to alcohol, see your GP at the first available opportunity.

Counselling online: Free and confidential online alcohol and other drugs counselling service provided.
counsellingonline.org.au | 24/7 support

NSW Alcohol and Drug Information Service: A confidential information, advice and referral telephone service that provides education, information, support, crisis counselling and referral to services in NSW.

Tel: 1800 250 015 | 24/7 support

Get Healthy Service: Free and confidential telephone service to help people make lifestyle changes in relation to healthy eating, being physically active, reducing harmful alcohol consumption and achieving and maintaining a healthy weight.

Tel: 1300 806 258 | gethealthynsw.com.au

1300 DRIVER: A service for long haul truck drivers and their families. 1300 DRIVER offers education, information, one-off and ongoing support and referrals for long haul drivers, related to alcohol, tobacco, drugs and health and lifestyle issues affecting them, via 24/7 telephone, website, and Twitter.

Tel: 1300 DRIVER | 24/7 support

Alcohol and Drug Foundation: Easy to access information about alcohol and other drugs. Services include a resource centre with free information, fact sheets and publications as well as email alerts for people interested in preventing alcohol and other drug-related harm.

adf.org.au

Your Room: Online drug and alcohol information and resources.
Yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au

Hello Sunday Morning: Online program to help individual workers understand why they drink and improve their relationship with alcohol.

Hellosundaymorning.org | 24/7 support

Alcohol Awareness Challenges: Challenges for individual workers to abstain from alcohol for the entire month.

Febfast.org.au | dryjuly.com

