

Ideas for Safer Drinking

Most problems are caused by drinking too much in one occasion.

One beer every day will usually not create problems in your life. Pregnant women or women planning to get pregnant and people with certain illnesses or on certain medications (even things like cold medicines), etc. should not drink at all.

If you will be driving, snowmobiling, hunting, or boating, or other physical activities that need a sharp mind and body control, do not drink at all before or during these activities.

Three beers in an hour will affect your thinking and your body co-ordination . . . you'll start to get drunk.

One beer = one shot or mixed drink = one glass of wine
They all have the same amount of alcohol.

General Guidelines

- Women should not drink more than two drinks a day.
- Men should not drink more than three drinks a day.
- Everyone should have some non-drinking days every week.

Drinking more than that in one day will increase the risk of liver and other health problems, and increase the risk of developing a habit of heavy drinking. Because women are smaller, alcohol affects them more quickly. Women also develop liver problems more quickly than men.

Avoiding Problems — Some Helpful Ideas

Start with a non-alcoholic drink and plan your drinking.

When you first go out to drink, have a non-alcoholic beverage first, like juice or water. Think about how long you are planning to be there and set yourself a safe limit. Keep in mind that you want to have fun but you do not want to do anything foolish. (Remember that once you get drunk, you will not be able to judge what is foolish or trouble. You will not know until the next day.) Then decide how you are going to space out those drinks. Do the same thing even when you are drinking at home with friends.

Drink slowly and do not drink more than one drink an hour.

It takes your liver about 1.5 hours to get rid of one drink. There is no way to make this happen faster. While your liver is working to get the alcohol out of your system, the alcohol is circulating through your body to the brain. The more alcohol you have in your body, the more it will affect the areas in your brain that control thinking and muscle movements.

It is easy to overload on alcohol without really realizing it:

If you start drinking at 8 p.m. and have three beers by 9 p.m., you will still have two drinks worth of alcohol in your body at 9:30 p.m. If you are a small woman, that is enough to be noticeably affected. If you are a large man, one or two more drinks will be enough to start being drunk even though you might not yet be stumbling and mumbling. Have more and you will be drunk fast.

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Keep track of your drinks.

Count and watch the time. Be aware that once you have had two or three drinks pretty fast, it will be hard to remember how much you have had and you will start losing your ability to think clearly.

Take breaks between drinks.

Have a non-alcoholic drink after every alcoholic drink.

If you have had a couple of drinks within an hour, drink pop or coffee for the next couple of rounds. Get up on the dance floor. Play a game.

Drinking water will help your liver and kidneys do their jobs better. Your liver needs water to do its work and alcohol pulls water out of your body, so drink water or other non-alcoholic liquids between alcoholic drinks. However, nothing will get that alcohol out of your body any faster. Drinking water or coffee won't help. Fresh air won't help. The only thing that works is time, so give your liver time to do its work.

Always eat before you drink and have something to eat while you drink.

If you drink on an empty stomach, the alcohol is absorbed into your blood right away. When the stomach is busy digesting food, the alcohol will not get into your bloodstream and brain as quickly.

Be especially careful with mixed drinks.

It is easy to drink too many rum and colas or rye and ginger ales because it tastes like you are just drinking pop.

Do not feel uncomfortable about saying no.

You may not want to drink at all when you are out socializing or you may not want to drink too much. Plan what you could say when someone wants you to have a drink but you do not want one. Remember that it is OK to say no.

When you get drunk, you are more likely to get into arguments and fights, get into accidents or dangerous situations, have unsafe sex, be unable to go to work or school the next day because of hangovers, forget to do what you were supposed to do, and get into other kinds of trouble.

Keep yourself and others safe.