

FROM NHS WEBSITE

Risks-Alcohol misuse

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Alcohol is a powerful chemical that can have a wide range of adverse effects on almost every part of your body, including your brain, bones and heart.

Alcohol and its associated risks can have both short-term and long-term effects.

Short-term effects of alcohol consumption

The short-term effects of alcohol consumption are outlined below. This information is based on the assumption that you have a normal tolerance to alcohol.

Dependent drinkers with a higher tolerance to alcohol can often drink much more without experiencing any noticeable effects.

1 to 2 units

After drinking 1 to 2 units of alcohol, your heart rate speeds up and your blood vessels expand, giving you the warm, sociable and talkative feeling associated with moderate drinking.

4 to 6 units

After drinking 4 to 6 units of alcohol, your brain and nervous system starts to be affected. It begins to affect the part of your brain associated with judgement and decision making, causing you to be more reckless and uninhibited.

The alcohol also impairs the cells in your nervous system, making you feel lightheaded and adversely affecting your reaction time and co-ordination.

8 to 9 units

After drinking 8 to 9 units of alcohol, your reaction times will be much slower, your speech will begin to slur and your vision will begin to lose focus.

Your liver, which filters alcohol out of your body, will be unable to remove all of the alcohol overnight, so it's likely you'll wake with a hangover.

10 to 12 units

After drinking 10 to 12 units of alcohol, your co-ordination will be highly impaired, placing you at serious risk of having an accident. The high level of alcohol has a depressant effect on both your mind and body, which makes you drowsy.

This amount of alcohol will begin to reach toxic (poisonous) levels. Your body attempts to quickly pass out the alcohol in your urine. This will leave you feeling badly [dehydrated](#) in the morning, which may cause a severe [headache](#).

The excess amount of alcohol in your system can also upset your digestion, leading to symptoms of nausea, vomiting, [diarrhoea](#) and [indigestion](#).

More than 12 units

If you drink more than 12 units of alcohol, you're at considerable risk of developing [alcohol poisoning](#), particularly if you're drinking many units over a short period of time.

It usually takes the liver about an hour to remove one unit of alcohol from the body.

Alcohol poisoning occurs when excessive amounts of alcohol start to interfere with the body's automatic functions, such as:

- breathing
- heart rate
- gag reflex, which prevents you choking

Alcohol poisoning can cause a person to fall into a [coma](#) and could lead to their death.

Other risks

Some of the other risks associated with alcohol misuse include:

- **accidents and injury** – more than 1 in 10 visits to accident and emergency (A&E) departments are because of alcohol-related illnesses
- **violence and antisocial behaviour** – each year in England more than 1.2 million violent incidents are linked to alcohol misuse
- **unsafe sex** – this can lead to unplanned pregnancies and [sexually transmitted infections \(STIs\)](#)

- **loss of personal possessions** – many people lose personal possessions, such as their wallet or mobile phone, when they're drunk
- **unplanned time off work or college** – this could put your job or education at risk