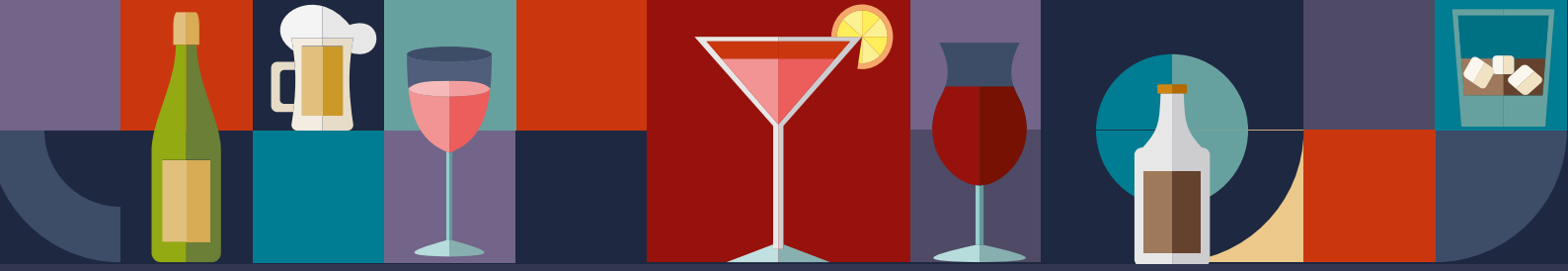

ALCOHOL & YOU

USE THIS GUIDE TO:

- Find out how drinking less can help us
- Check how much you're drinking
- Use tips and ideas to plan to cut down
- Find extra support around alcohol, substance use and staying safe

Cutting back on drinking alcohol can make us feel better and improve our health

These pages are to help you find out more about how drinking alcohol can affect your health and wellbeing and can help you if you want to drink less.

Drinking alcohol can harm our health and wellbeing in lots of different ways. From day-to-day issues - such as hangovers, poor sleep, spending more money than we want to and feeling anxious - to serious and long-term effects on our health.

You can find out more about how alcohol affects health here.

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Caerdydd a'r Fro
Tim Iechyd Cyhoeddus
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
Public Health Team

GIG CYMRU NHS WALES
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Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

DRINKING LESS CAN HELP US...

Short-term benefits >

- Have more energy
- Feel better in the morning
- Save money
- Have better looking skin

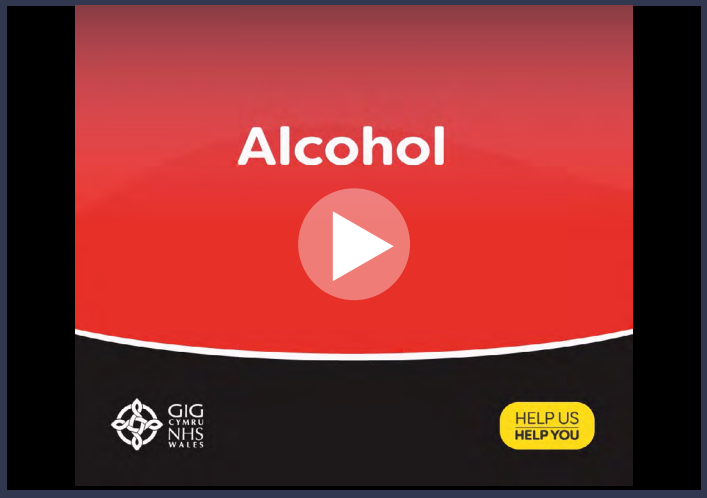
Long-term benefits >

- Sleep better
- Improve your mood
- Help maintain a healthy weight
- Have a lower risk of high blood pressure, liver disease and cancer

Lower risk drinking

There is no totally safe level of alcohol to drink but the more you drink the greater the risk of harming your health. The risk is also greater if you drink alcohol regularly.

Some people should be even more careful when drinking alcohol, for example people who are at risk of falls, who take medicines and who already have health problems.



You can lower the risks to your health by following this advice, **which is the same for both men and women:**

- Don't regularly drink more than 14 units of alcohol a week.
- Try to spread any alcohol you drink over 3 or more days and try to have several alcohol-free days each week.
- Try to limit how much you drink at any one time.
- If you're pregnant or think you could become pregnant, it's safest for your baby to avoid alcohol altogether.

83% of people in Wales drink at lower risk levels with 17% of these not drinking at all. This means alcohol is not likely to harm their health. But some people drink more heavily and more often.

How much am I drinking?

Different drinks have different amounts of alcohol in them. You can see how much alcohol is in a drink by checking a bottle or can for:

- The alcohol by volume (ABV) level – higher if the drink has more alcohol in
- The number of alcohol units (standard drinks) in that bottle or can

The picture below shows some examples of how much alcohol is in different drinks. Knowing how much alcohol is in your drink can help you stay in control - helping you to stay healthy and save money.

You can find out more about how many units of alcohol are in different drinks here.

Pint of ordinary-strength lager/beer/cider (568ml, ABV 4%)

2.3 units

Standard glass of wine (175ml, ABV 13%)

2.3 units

Single shot of spirits (25ml, ABV 40%)

1 unit

Pregnancy and drinking

- If you are pregnant or think you could become pregnant, it's safest for your baby to avoid alcohol all together.
- Drinking in pregnancy can lead to long-term harm to your baby, with the more you drink the greater the risk.

The risk of harm to your baby is likely to be low if you have drunk only small amounts of alcohol before you knew you were pregnant or during pregnancy, but you should avoid further drinking.

If you are worried about alcohol use during pregnancy, or if you are still drinking alcohol, talk to your doctor or midwife for their advice and support. There is more NHS information about alcohol and pregnancy here.

Cutting down on drinking

Often, the amount we drink can creep up on us and before we know it we are drinking far more than we mean to or want to. People drink alcohol for many different reasons - this NHS self-help guide can help you think more about why you may be drinking alcohol.

There are lots of reasons to stop or cut down on your drinking. Making even a small change can have a big impact on your health and wellbeing. Alcoholic drinks are also high in calories, so cutting back on the amount you drink can help you lose weight and save you money.

If you are drinking more than you would like to, you are not alone. Lots of people find it hard to cut back. But every small step you take brings you closer to your goals, and the right support can make it easier.

There are also lots of simple things you can do to cut down on alcohol or even stop altogether. These include:

- **Planning when you will drink** - aim for at least 2 days in a row without alcohol and plan how to stay in control at times you might drink more, like a night out or a party.
- **Trying to cut down on how much you drink** – try picking drinks with less alcohol or try alcohol-free drinks. You can find more tips to help you cut down on alcohol here.
- **Using a drinking diary, or a drinking app**, such as this one from the NHS, to help keep track and plan your drinking. You can find an example of a drinking diary here or you can just keep your own diary in a notebook.

HEALTH WARNING

If you drink a lot of alcohol and often, it can be dangerous to stop drinking too quickly without getting medical help first. Speak to your doctor or pharmacist before you stop drinking alcohol if you feel things like shaking, sweating or feeling sick and anxious until you have your first drink of the day.

Further support

If you or someone you care about needs support with their drinking or other substances, speak to a **doctor or pharmacist.**

Free help is also available from:
Cardiff and Vale Drug and Alcohol Service (CAVDAS).
Go to www.cavdas.com or call 0300 300 7000 to find out more.

DAN 24/7 the Wales Drug and Alcohol Helpline.
Go to www.dan247.org.uk or call 0808 808 2234, anytime day or night, to find out more.