



University Hospitals Bristol
NHS Foundation Trust

Patient information service
Bristol Royal Infirmary

Alcohol and nutrition



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What are the recommended limits for alcohol use?

The NHS recommends that if you drink alcohol there is no safe level.

Men and women should not regularly drink more than 14 units of alcohol per week.

Ideally this should be spread evenly over three days or more.

Women who are pregnant should not drink alcohol at all.

If you are concerned about your alcohol use, or have difficulties in making changes to your alcohol use, it may be helpful to talk to your GP about it, or if you are in hospital, ask to speak to one of the alcohol nurse specialists. There are a number of contacts at the back of this leaflet which may also be helpful.

If you are drinking more alcohol than the recommended amounts, it may have an effect on the essential nutrients your body needs in order to stay healthy.

Alcohol can:

- result in eating unhealthy foods, which means fewer essential nutrients in your body
- affect how nutrients are absorbed and used by your body.

As a result of regularly drinking too much alcohol, your body can be lacking in several different nutrients:

- folic acid
- vitamin B12
- vitamin A
- calcium
- thiamine.

These nutrients are all essential in helping us to stay healthy.

To give your body the best chance of working properly and to stay healthy, you need food and non-alcoholic drinks that provide you with all the essential vitamins and minerals it needs.

A healthy diet consists of:

- fruit and vegetables
- bread, cereals and potatoes
- meat, fish, eggs, beans
- milk and dairy foods.

You should try to drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids every day and try eating little and often if you struggle to eat bigger meals.

Alcohol and your blood sugar

Drinking even small amounts of alcohol on an empty stomach can lead to low blood sugar levels.

When your sugar levels are low, you tend to crave sugary foods such as chocolate. This is your body's way of trying to raise your sugar levels.

The rise in blood sugar from sweet foods does not last long, so it is important to eat slow release energy foods such as bread, cereals and potatoes.

A lack of nutrients in your body as a result of drinking too much alcohol can cause:

- increased risk of infections
- anxiety
- depression
- poor concentration
- numbness or lack of feeling
- confusion
- diarrhoea
- weight loss
- nausea
- poor mobility
- pins and needles
- muscle wasting.

Contacts

ROADS: 0117 440 0540 (Bristol)

DHI: 01454 868 750 (South Gloucestershire)

Addaction: 01934 427 940 (Weston-Super-Mare)

Advocacy service: 0117 980 0376

Alcoholics anonymous Bristol: 0117 926 5926 or 24 hour service:
0117 926 5520 or the national helpline: 0800 917 7650

SMART Recovery: 0117 922 2364

SWAN Project: 0117 989 2521

Hawksprings: 0117 964 2859

NHS Advice: 111

Drinkline: 0800 917 8282 (9am – 11pm, Monday to Friday)

www.drinkaware.co.uk

www.nhs.uk/drinkcheck

For loved ones, family and friends of someone who has alcohol problems

DHI: 0117 916 6588

Al-Anon: 0800 0086 811

Adapted from:

Tayside Council on alcohol and Fife Alcohol support service.

Other information from:

Drink Smart self help Guide, NHS Bristol.

As well as providing clinical care, our Trust has an important role in research. This allows us to discover new and improved ways of treating patients.

While under our care, you may be invited to take part in research. To find out more please visit:
www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/research-innovation

For access to other patient leaflets and information please go to the following address:

www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/information-for-patients/

Hospital switchboard: 0117 923 0000



Minicom: 0117 934 9869



www.uhbristol.nhs.uk



For an interpreter or signer please contact the telephone number on your appointment letter.



For this leaflet in large print or PDF format, please email patientleaflets@uhbristol.nhs.uk.

