

WHITWICK ROAD SURGERY

Alcohol Consumption

A brief summary leaflet about alcohol consumption, a more detailed leaflet on alcohol is also available.

What are the safe limits of alcohol drinking?

- Men - no more than 21 units per week (and no more than 4 units in any one day)
- Women – no more than 14 units per week (and no more than 3 units in any one day)
- Pregnant women and all women trying to get pregnant should not drink alcohol at all

In general the more you drink above these limits the more harmful alcohol is likely to be. Also binge drinking (for example 10 units twice a week) can be harmful even though the weekly total does not seem too high.

What are units of alcohol?

One unit of alcohol is 10ml (1cl) by volume or 8g by weight of pure alcohol.

- One unit of alcohol is about equal to:
Half a pint of ordinary strength beer, lager or cider (3-4% alcohol by volume)
Or
A standard pub measure (50ml) of fortified wine such as sherry or port (20% alcohol by volume)
- There are one and a half units of alcohol in:
A small glass (125ml) of ordinary strength wine (12% alcohol by volume)
Or
A standard pub measure (35ml) of spirits (40% alcohol by volume)
- Note many wines and beers are stronger than 'ordinary' standard strength

What problems can I develop if I drink too much alcohol?

You have an increased risk of developing many illnesses for example:

- Serious liver disease (cirrhosis or hepatitis)
- Stomach or pancreatic disorders
- Depression and anxiety
- Sexual difficulties
- Muscle and heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Damage to nervous tissue
- Accidents (in particular injury and death due to fires and car crashes)
- Some cancers (mouth, gullet, liver, colon and breast)
- Obesity (alcohol has many calories)

You may become alcohol dependant

This means that if you stop drinking alcohol for a day or so, you may suffer unpleasant withdrawal symptoms. For example: feeling sick, trembling, sweating, craving for alcohol. So you end up drinking alcohol every day to avoid these symptoms.

You can damage others

Many families have become severely affected by one member of the family becoming a problem drinker. Emotional, financial, and psychological distress often occurs in such families. Often the problem drinker denies or refuses to accept that the root cause is alcohol.

Tackling the problem of heavy drinking

Many people can quite easily cut down on heavy drinking. Try drinking low alcohol beers, pacing the rate of drinking, or drinking on fewer days of the week. For some people it is more difficult.

- Accepting that you may have a problem can be the biggest step to returning to sensible drinking. Counselling and support from a Doctor, Nurse or Counsellor often helps
- A 'detoxification' may be advised for some people
- Referral for specialist help is needed in some cases

Further resources and sources for help

Drinkline- National Alcoholic Helpline Tel 0800 917 8282

Offers help to callers worried about their own drinking and support to the family and friends of people who are drinking. Advises callers on where to go for additional help.

Alcoholics Anonymous Tel 0845 769 7555

Web www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

PO Box 1
10 Toft Green
York
YO1 7ND

There are over 3000 meetings held in the UK each week with over 40,000 members. The only requirement for each membership is the desire to stop drinking.

AL-Anon Family Group Tel 020 7403 0888

Web www.al-anonuk.org.uk

61 Great Dover Street
London
SE1 4YF

Offers support for families and friends of alcoholics whether the drinker is still drinking or not.

Know your units campaign from the NHS

Web www.units.nhs.uk

Aims to tell drinkers how many units are in their drinks and help them to stick to their limits.

Department of Health –their alcohol misuse page.

Web www.dh.gov.uk/en/publichealth/healthimprovement/alcoholmisuse/index.htm

Includes information on the National Alcohol Strategy, policy and advice on sensible drinking and the prevention of alcohol misuse.