ABOUT DRINKAWARE

Drinkaware is an independent not-for-profit organisation with a vision of an Ireland where alcohol is not misused. Our mission is to work with others to fundamentally and permanently change attitudes and behaviours so that drinking to excess and drinking underage become unacceptable. We do this by raising awareness, creating understanding and supporting behaviour change through evidence-led education and effective communications.

We aim to encourage behaviour change by providing practical tools and resources to support our work in three key areas:

- Tackling underage drinking
- Reducing alcohol misuse
- Supporting alcohol education

Drinkaware is determined to make a difference and firmly believe that our work will play a key role in changing attitudes towards harmful drinking and, in particular, help prevent future generations of people in Ireland from misusing alcohol.

GET THE FACTS ABOUT ALCOHOL

Consumption of alcohol in Ireland is consistently higher than in many other countries. According to the World Health Organisation’s Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health, the rate of binge drinking in Ireland is second highest in the WHO European Region, with Irish research showing that 75% of alcohol was consumed as part of a binge drinking session in 2013. With approximately 90 alcohol-related deaths per month, the range of harms and problems the misuse of alcohol presents in Irish society cannot be underestimated.

If you decide to drink alcohol, it’s important to get the facts you need to make informed choices about your own drinking.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT DRINKAWARE.IE
In Ireland, a standard drink is a measure of alcohol. It is important to be aware of a standard drink measure as it is a useful way to keep track of how much you are drinking on any given occasion.

One standard drink contains 10 grams of pure alcohol. The number of standard drinks is based on the size of the drink and its alcohol strength, usually shown on labels as alcohol by volume (ABV).

**COMMON EXAMPLES OF ONE STANDARD DRINK:**

- Half pint of lager, beer or stout (284ml)
- Small glass of wine (100ml)
- Pub measure of spirits (35.5ml)

In addition to knowing how many standard drinks you consume, you should get to know how many calories are in your glass. One gram of alcohol contains seven calories, which is almost the same as pure fat (nine calories). Here are some examples to be aware of:

- **PINT OF BEER (4.5%)**
  - 2 standard drinks
  - 162 calories
- **BOTTLE OF WINE (750ml, 12.5%)**
  - 7.5 standard drinks
  - 570 calories
- **SPIRITS (35.5ml) AND SMALL MIXER**
  - 1 standard drink
  - 108 calories

While standard drinks are a useful way to measure the amount of alcohol in each drink you consume, it is also important to be aware of how much you are drinking over time. The HSE low-risk guidelines for alcohol consumption are there to help you do just that.6

Drinks should be spaced out over the week and never consumed in one sitting, with at least two alcohol-free days. These guidelines are intended for adults only.

Up to 11 standard drinks (110g alcohol) spread out over one week

Up to 17 standard drinks (170g alcohol) spread out over one week

Drinks should be spaced out over the week and never consumed in one sitting, with at least two alcohol-free days. These guidelines are intended for adults only.

**THIS IS WHAT 11 STANDARD DRINKS LOOKS LIKE**

(one bottle of wine (12.5%) and three glasses of 4.5% beer)

**THIS IS WHAT 17 STANDARD DRINKS LOOKS LIKE**

(seven pints of beer (4.5%) and three pub measures of spirits)
WHAT IS BINGE DRINKING AND WHY IS IT DANGEROUS?

Binge drinking is when you drink six or more standard drinks on one occasion (for example, 3 pints of beer). Regularly drinking alcohol at this level can increase your risk of experiencing alcohol-related harms such as:

- Accidents
- Violence
- Cancers
- Injuries
- Stomach disease
- Stroke

In Ireland, we underestimate how much alcohol we drink by about 60% so it is important to get into the habit of keeping track of how much you are drinking to make sure you don't exceed the guidelines. If you, or someone you know, regularly drinks above the guidelines it is advisable to cut down on how much alcohol you drink. See our tips for cutting down on page 9.

THERE ARE TIMES WHEN ALCOHOL SHOULD NOT BE CONSUMED AT ALL, INCLUDING WHEN:

- Driving
- Cycling
- Pregnant
- Caring for Children
- Swimming
- Operating Machinery

Those who experience chronic medical conditions, for example diabetes or epilepsy, should seek advice from their doctor before consuming alcohol.

USE OUR TRACKER ON PAGE 10 TO SEE HOW MUCH ALCOHOL YOU DRINK IN ONE WEEK
MENTAL HEALTH
Alcohol can have serious negative impacts on your mental health, affecting your ability to cope with everyday stresses. There is a significant link between the misuse of alcohol and a range of mental health issues including depression, anxiety and suicide.8

CANCER
Alcohol is known to be a contributing factor to seven types of cancer - cancer of the mouth, larynx (voicebox), throat, oesophagus (foodpipe), breast, liver and bowel.9 In Ireland, over 900 new cancers, with 500 deaths, are attributed to alcohol every year.10

STOMACH DISORDERS
Drinking alcohol irritates your digestive system, causing your stomach to produce more acid than usual, which can lead to gastritis (the inflammation of the stomach lining). This triggers vomiting, diarrhoea and, in heavy drinkers, even bleeding.

FAMILY PROBLEMS
A 2014 report showed that one in ten Irish parents/guardians reported that children had experienced one or more harms in the past 12 months as a result of someone else’s drinking, including verbal abuse, being left in unsafe situations, witnessing serious violence in the home or physical abuse.11
STOMACH DISORDERS
Drinking alcohol irritates your digestive system, causing your stomach to produce more acid than usual, which can lead to gastritis (the inflammation of stomach lining). This triggers vomiting, diarrhoea and, in heavy drinkers, even bleeding.

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE
As you drink, your blood pressure rises and your heart rate increases. Regularly drinking over the low-risk guidelines can significantly increase your risk of high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.12

WEIGHT GAIN
Alcohol is high in calories however these are 'empty calories'; they have no nutritional value. Remember to consider how many calories are in your glass the next time you drink alcohol.

BAD SLEEP
Even just a few drinks can interfere with the normal sleep process, affecting the quality of your sleep. If you regularly drink alcohol, your sleep patterns may be disturbed and you may have less energy than normal.
BENEFITS OF CUTTING DOWN

There are many benefits to drinking less alcohol and it won’t take long to notice some of the positive outcomes from your efforts. Here are just some of the benefits to reducing the amount of alcohol you drink:

**IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH**
Alcohol can contribute to the development of mental health difficulties, as well as making existing problems worse. If you frequently feel low after drinking alcohol, reduce your intake and keep a diary to track any changes in how you feel.

**BETTER LONG-TERM PHYSICAL HEALTH**
Many alcohol-related health risks don’t appear until later in life. Cutting down on how much alcohol you drink now will reduce your risk of developing serious health issues such as cancer, liver or heart disease in the future.

**SAVE MONEY**
People often don’t consider how much money they are spending on alcohol. Work out how much on average you spend on alcohol in a week and multiply it by 52 to see your annual spend. If you were to set this aside every week, imagine how much you could save over time.

**APPEARANCE**
Alcohol has a high calorie content and so, regularly drinking increases your calorie intake. Alcohol also dehydrates the body which can affect the appearance of your skin. Cutting down on how much you drink and opting for low-calorie alternatives can contribute to maintaining a healthy weight and appearance.

**INCREASED ENERGY**
Alcohol can affect how well you sleep, often leaving you with a bad night’s rest and less energy than normal the following day. Reduce your alcohol consumption to see the positive effect on your energy levels.

TRY OUT SOME OF OUR TIPS TO CUT DOWN ON ALCOHOL ON THE NEXT PAGE
USUALLY DRINK PINTS? OPT FOR HALF PINTS OR BOTTLES INSTEAD.

DOWNSIZE YOUR DRINK. TRY A LOWER STRENGTH BEER OR LOW ALCOHOL WINE.

DON’T FORGET TO HYDRATE! ALTERNATE EACH DRINK WITH A GLASS OF WATER.

NEVER TOP UP YOUR GLASS. FINISH ONE GLASS OF WINE BEFORE POURING ANOTHER.

WHY NOT HAVE A SPRITZER OR SHANDY? YOU’LL HARDLY NOTICE THE DIFFERENCE.

NEVER FREE-POUR SPIRITS, ALWAYS USE A MEASURE INSTEAD.

ONE STANDARD DRINK

35.5 ml
YOUR WEEKLY DRINKS TRACKER

Download a monthly drinks tracker from our website: drinkaware.ie

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Drinks Consumed</th>
<th>Standard Drinks</th>
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<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td>Total drinks consumed:</td>
<td>Total standard drinks:</td>
<td>Total spent:</td>
<td>Comments:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Up to 11 standard drinks (110g alcohol) spread out over one week

Up to 17 standard drinks (170g alcohol) spread out over one week
WHERE CAN I GET SUPPORT?

If you are worried about your own or a loved one’s drinking and need support, there are many services available across the country.

The HSE Drugs and Alcohol Helpline is a free and confidential, active listening helpline and email support service offering non-directive support, information, guidance and referral to anyone with a question or concern related to substance use.

SEE OUR WEBSITE FOR A NATIONWIDE SUPPORT SERVICES DIRECTORY: DRINKAWARE.IE

REFERENCES


3, 4, 5 http://www.drugs.ie/alcohol_info/tips_tools/how_much_am_i_drinking2/ [Accessed 08/02/2016]

6 http://www.hse.ie/eng/health/hl/change/Alcohol/ [Accessed 05/09/2016]


12 Irish Heart Foundation ‘Say when sooner’ magazine. Available at: www.irishheart.ie
VISIT DRINKAWARE.IE TO TRY OUT OUR HANDY DRINKS CALCULATOR

DRINKAWARE

Web: drinkaware.ie  Email: info@drinkaware.ie
Registered Charity Number: 20204601

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The information in this booklet is not to be considered as medical advice. Always seek professional medical advice from a registered doctor or nurse.