

# Factsheet: UK's low risk drinking guidelines

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change starts with you

The UK's Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) advise that, if you choose to drink, to keep health risks from alcohol low, it is safest for both men and women to drink no more than 14 units a week, spread over three or more days with several drink-free days, and no bingeing.



## How much is 14 units of alcohol?

Because alcoholic drinks come in different strengths and sizes, units are a good way of telling how strong your drink is. It's not as simple as one drink, one unit.

Here's a guide to what 14 units of alcohol looks like:



6 pints of beer (568ml/4%)



6 glasses of wine (175ml/13%)

Always check the label for the ABV (alcohol by volume) to find out the alcohol content. Use our Unit and Calorie Calculator to help work out how many units are in your drink.

Visit [drinkaware.co.uk/tools](https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/tools)

## The CMOs' guidelines state:



The risk of developing a range of health problems (including cancers of the mouth, throat and breast) increases the more you drink on a regular basis.



If you choose to drink 14 units a week, it's best to spread it over three or more days with several drink-free days, and no bingeing. Even if you have one or two heavy drinking episodes a week, you can increase your risk or long-term illness.



If you would like to cut down the amount you drink, a good way to help achieve this is to have several drink-free days a week.



## Alcohol and pregnancy

The Chief Medical Officers' (CMO) guidance is that:

- If you are pregnant or think you could be pregnant, the safest approach is not to drink alcohol at all
- Drinking in pregnancy can lead to long-term harm to the baby, the more you drink the greater the risk

### What if I've already drunk alcohol while pregnant?

If you didn't know you were pregnant and you drank alcohol during early pregnancy, don't panic. Talk to your GP or midwife about any concerns you may have.

## Binge drinking

The NHS defines binge drinking as **'drinking lots of alcohol in a short space of time or drinking to get drunk'**. This is quantified by the Office of National Statistics as consuming;

**over 8 units in a single session for men**



**8 units** = 5 bottles (330ml) of 5% strength beer

**over 6 units in a single session for women**



**6 units** = 2 large (250ml) glasses of 13% wine

## To keep your health risks from alcohol low:

- 1** Limit the amount of alcohol you drink on any single occasion.
- 2** Drink more slowly, drink with food, and alternate with water or soft drinks.
- 3** Plan ahead to get home safely. Avoid risky places and activities and make sure you are with people that you know.



**For more information, advice and tools to help you reduce your drinking visit [drinkaware.co.uk](https://www.drinkaware.co.uk)**

Source: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/binge-drinking-effects/>