

# Identifying excessive alcohol consumption

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The borderline on what constitutes excessive alcohol consumption varies from one situation to another. What is too much in one set of circumstances may be reasonable or even low in another. There are, however, some general guidelines.

For men the limit for high risk consumption is 23-24 bottles of medium-strength beer or three and a half bottles of table wine or one and three-quarters bottles of distilled spirits per week. For women, the limit for high risk consumption is 12-16 bottles of medium-strength beer or two and a third bottles of table wine or one and one-fifth bottles of distilled spirits per week.

Binge drinking and even isolated instances of drunkenness can be hazardous to your health. For example, your danger of being involved in an accident increases significantly. Regular daily consumption may also gradually increase your dependency on alcohol. Alcohol can become a crutch in everyday routines. Your alcohol tolerance increases, which means that you need to drink more to feel the same effect. The risk limits have been set for average healthy adults: the limits for young people, for people taking medication or pregnant women are significantly lower or even zero.

Use of alcohol at work and during working hours is also excessive consumption. The risk of traffic accidents increases after just a small amount. This is important to consider in the mornings as well, even if you feel fine after the previous evening's drinking. Family arguments can easily arise, because men and women have different drinking habits and attitudes to drinking. From children's perspective, even average alcohol consumption and intoxication can be too much. You should always stop and think about whether your alcohol consumption is excessive if your friends and family notice it, or if you are even slightly concerned about your own consumption. Alcohol use is never simply an individual matter.

A moderate drinker who overimbibes may suffer from morning hangover or nausea, tiredness, slight shivering or trembling. Habitual overconsumption is often difficult to detect because the person has an increased alcohol tolerance – in other words, the person can hold their drink. Tests can identify elevated blood pressure, elevated liver enzymes and other changes in the organs of a heavy drinker.

Alcoholism – that is, alcohol dependency and severe alcohol-related problems – involves severe drunkenness and significantly elevated alcohol tolerance. An alcoholic may appear quite coherent, even when their blood alcohol level is 0.30 mg/L. Levels of 0.50 or 0.60 are not uncommon. Typical withdrawal symptoms for alcoholics are severe shivering or trembling, auditory or visual delusions, seizures similar to epileptic fits, and long-term sleeplessness. Severe alcohol problems can sometimes also be linked to difficult life crises. It can often be difficult to perform everyday tasks.

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