

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ALCOHOL USE

In the Clinic
Annals of Internal Medicine

How Can Alcohol Affect Me?

According to the NIAAA, for men up to age 65 years lower-risk alcohol use is no more than 4 drinks on any single day and no more than 14 drinks per week. For women, who tend to have lower volumes of distribution, and men older than 65 years, lower-risk alcohol use is no more than 3 drinks on any single day and no more than 7 drinks per week

When Is Alcohol Use Unhealthy?

Unhealthy alcohol use can cause serious health and emotional problems. Drinking more than what is outlined above is considered unhealthy alcohol use. Unhealthy alcohol use can cause:

- Reflux
- Ulcers
- Vitamin deficiencies
- High blood pressure
- Various cancers
- Stroke
- Cirrhosis (scarring of the liver)
- Heart Problems
- Seizures
- Alcohol poisoning
- Depression
- Diabetes mellitus

Unhealthy alcohol use is also associated with increased risk for diabetes, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, and depression. It can lead to unhealthy behaviors that may cause:

- Car accidents
- Accidents like falling or drowning
- Firearm injuries
- Intimate partner violence
- Homicide
- Suicide



How Is Unhealthy Alcohol Use Diagnosed?

Your doctor will ask you about your medical history and complete a physical examination. He or she may take blood samples, which will help the doctor know if your drinking is causing health problems.

How Is Unhealthy Alcohol Use Treated?

Your doctor or other health professional can support you in cutting down on drinking. Family and friends can help, too. There are other ways to reduce alcohol use, including:

- Talk therapy
- 12-step programs or Alcoholics Anonymous
- Certain medicines

How Can I Use Alcohol Safely?

Talk with your doctor about whether it is safe for you to drink alcohol if you:

- Take prescription medicines
- Are older than age 65
- Are a young adult
- Have a chronic health condition

For More Information



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/alcohol-use.htm

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health/overview-alcohol-consumption