

Avoiding Risky Drinking

Are your drinking habits putting your health and safety at risk?
Learn how to recognize when your drinking has become a problem.

In many cultures, drinking alcohol is a regular part of socializing and celebrating. However, alcohol can be a powerful drug, and consuming too much of it can put your safety and health—even your life—at risk. Long-term overindulgence can cause serious damage to your health. Additionally, alcohol can interact negatively with many common medications.

TAKING A HEALTHY APPROACH

If you don't already drink, the recommendation from *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*¹ is not to start. The reason for this is that even though there have been studies that show benefits to moderate drinking other studies have shown a link between moderate alcohol consumption and increased risk of violence, drowning, breast cancer, and injuries from falls and motor vehicle collisions.

However, if you do drink, the recommendation for moderate

drinking for women is: 1 "drink" or less per day; for men: 2 "drinks" or less per day; and for people 65 and older: 1 "drink" or less per day. A standard "drink" is generally equal to a bottle of beer, a glass of wine, a shot of distilled liquor, or a cocktail or mixed drink.

TOO MUCH, TOO OFTEN: "AT-RISK" DRINKING

According to the National Institutes of Health, "at risk" or "heavy" drinking for men is more than 4 standard drinks in one day or more than 14 standard drinks in one week. For women its more than 3 standard drinks in one day or more than 7 standard drinks in one week.

TOO MUCH, TOO FAST: BINGE DRINKING

Binge drinking is a dangerous pattern of drinking that can put your health and safety at serious risk. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism defines binge drinking as drinking that raises your blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 percent² or higher.

A rough way to estimate this for women is: 4 or more standard "drinks" within 2 hours; for men: 5 or more standard "drinks" within 2 hours.



