

NHS INFO ON 'UNITS' AND THEIR EFFECT



A 'Unit of Alcohol' is the amount that the average person can process in an hour. It's roughly equivalent to a single measure of spirits, 3/4 of a bottle of alcopop or just under half a pint of beer.

1 to 2 units

After drinking 1 to 2 units of alcohol, your heart rate speeds up and your blood vessels expand, giving you the warm, sociable and talkative feeling associated with moderate drinking.

4 to 6 units

After drinking 4 to 6 units of alcohol, your brain and nervous system starts to be affected. It begins to affect the part of your brain associated with judgement and decision making, **causing you to be more reckless and uninhibited.**

The alcohol also impairs the cells in your nervous system, making you feel lightheaded and **adversely affecting your reaction time and co-ordination.**

8 to 9 units

After drinking 8 to 9 units of alcohol, **your reaction times will be much slower, your speech will begin to slur and your vision will begin to lose focus.**

Your liver, which filters alcohol out of your body, will be unable to remove all of the alcohol overnight, so it's likely you'll wake with a hangover.

10 to 12 units

After drinking 10 to 12 units of alcohol, **your co-ordination will be highly impaired, placing you at serious risk of having an accident.** The high level of alcohol has a depressant effect on both your mind and body, which makes you drowsy.

This amount of alcohol will begin to reach toxic (poisonous) levels. Your body attempts to quickly pass out the alcohol in your urine. This will leave you feeling badly dehydrated in the morning, which may cause a severe headache.

The excess amount of alcohol in your system can also upset your digestion, leading to symptoms of nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and indigestion.

More than 12 units

If you drink more than 12 units of alcohol, **you're at considerable risk of developing alcohol poisoning, particularly if you're drinking many units over a short period of time.**

It usually takes the liver about an hour to remove one unit of alcohol from the body.

Alcohol poisoning occurs when excessive amounts of alcohol start to interfere with the body's automatic functions, such as:

- breathing
- heart rate
- gag reflex, which prevents you choking

Alcohol poisoning can cause a person to fall into a coma and could lead to their death.

OTHER RISKS

Some of the other risks associated with alcohol misuse include:

Accidents and Injury

More than 1 in 10 visits to accident and emergency (A&E) departments are because of alcohol-related illnesses.

Violence and Antisocial Behaviour

Each year in England more than 1.2 million violent incidents are linked to alcohol misuse.

Unsafe Sex

This can lead to unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Loss of Personal Possessions

Many people lose personal possessions, such as their wallet or mobile phone, when they're drunk.