A Guide to Low-Risk Drinking

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

Center for Substance Abuse Treatment

Drink   Less

ireta

**Institute for Research, Education, and
Treatment in Addictions**
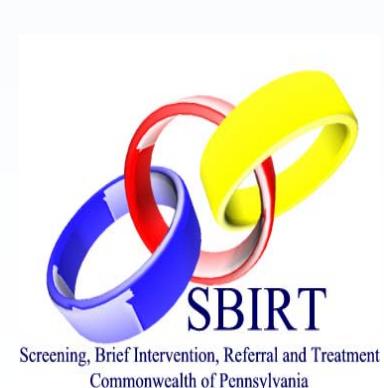
SBIRT

Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral and Treatment
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

The Drinker's Pyramid

AUDIT Scores | Types of Drinkers

- 20+ — 5% — Probable Alcohol Dependence
- 8 – 19 — 20% — High-Risk Drinkers
- 1 – 7 — 35% — Low-Risk Drinkers
- 0 — 40% — Abstainers
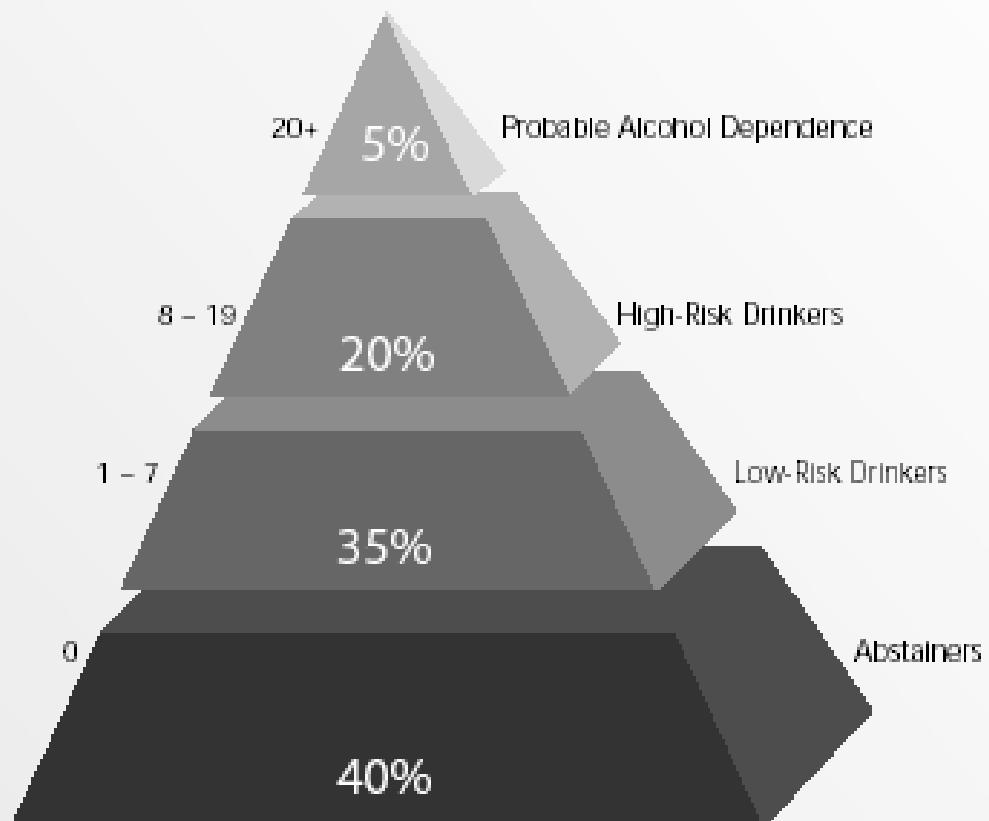
NOTES:

What's a Standard Drink?

1 standard drink =

1 can or bottle of beer

OR

A single shot of spirits (whiskey, gin, vodka, etc.)

OR

A glass of wine or a small glass of sherry

OR

A small glass of liquor or aperitif

Effects of High-Risk Drinking

Aggressive, irrational behaviour.
Arguments. Violence.
Depression. Nervousness.

Cancer of throat and mouth.

Frequent colds. Reduced resistance to infection. Increased risk of pneumonia.

Liver damage.

Trembling hands.
Tingling fingers.
Numbness. Painful nerves.

Ulcer.

Impaired sensation leading to falls.

Numb, tingling toes.
Painful nerves.

Alcohol dependence.
Memory loss.

Premature aging. Drinker's nose.

Weakness of heart muscle.
Heart failure. Anemia.
Impaired blood clotting.
Breast cancer.

Vitamin deficiency. Bleeding.
Severe inflammation of the stomach. Vomiting.
Diarrhea. Malnutrition.

Inflammation of the pancreas.

In men:
Impaired sexual performance.
In women:
Risk of giving birth to deformed, retarded babies or low birth weight babies.

High-risk drinking may lead to social, legal, medical, domestic, job and financial problems. It may also cut your lifespan and lead to accidents and death from drunken-driving

Should I Stop Drinking or Just Cut Down?

You should stop drinking if:

- You have tried to cut down before but have not been successful

- You suffer from morning shakes during a heavy drinking period.

- You have high blood pressure, you are pregnant, you have liver disease

Or

- You are taking medicine that reacts with alcohol

You should try to drink at low-risk levels if:

- During the last year you have been drinking at low-risk levels most of the time

- You do not suffer from early morning shakes

- You would like to drink at low-risk levels

Note that you should choose low-risk drinking only if **all three** apply to you.

What's a Low-Risk Limit?

- No more than two standard drinks a day

- Do *not* drink at least two days of the week

But remember. There are times when even one or two drinks can be too much—for example:

- When driving or operating machinery.

- When pregnant or breast feeding.

- When taking certain medications.

- If you have certain medical conditions.

- If you cannot control your drinking.

Ask your health care provider for more information.