A Guide to Low-Risk Drinking

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
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Substance Abuse and Mental Health
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Institute for Research, Education, and
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The information provided in this booklet was developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and was extracted from the Brief Intervention Manual, 2001.

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

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.