



## Alcohol and Stress

### Do any of these scenarios sound familiar?

- Had a bad day at work?
- Got some family worries on your mind?
- Having relationship problems?
- Are the pressures of Exams getting to you?
- Have your kids been running you ragged?
- Are you worried about money?
- Never have enough time in the day?



### Many people turn to alcohol to reduce stress?

- A drink can be the signal that “free time” has begun after a long day for lots of people.
- A glass of wine in the evening can be the demarcation between ‘being mum’ and adult time
- It can seem like alcohol makes you feel more relaxed in the short term. However, if you regularly exceed the daily guidelines you could actually end up making your stress worse.



*There is however no evidence that one or two units of alcohol carries significant risk and there is evidence to suggest that a small amount of alcohol with food can have benefits in relation to heart disease. Alcohol with a meal can reduce the sudden rise of the chemical fibrinogen in the blood stream which is a contributor to blood clots.*

Whatever stress you're facing, there are more effective ways to cope with it than with alcohol.

### GP Dr. Sarah Jarvis says:

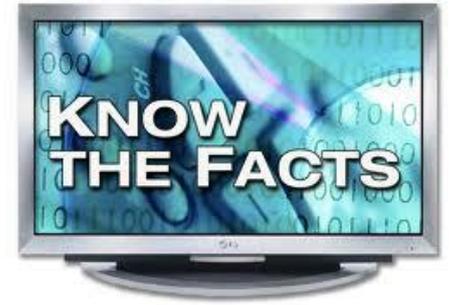
“Exercise is an excellent way to de-stress. Even a brisk walk can clear your head and make the worries of the day disappear”.

**Professor Cary Cooper**, Professor of Organisational Psychology and Health at the University of Lancaster, says:

“Going out and getting drunk is basically an avoidance strategy – you're not properly confronting the issues that make you feel stressed in the first place.

The best way to deal with stress is to choose a trusted friend or colleague and tell them what's worrying you. Then, together you can come up with some solutions. That's often all people need to start feeling better. It doesn't matter whether you're having relationship problems or are facing redundancy at work – drinking alcohol is no good for dealing with stress”.

## Alcohol Fact Sheet



- The NHS advice on drinking is:
  - Men should drink no more than 3 or 4 units of alcohol per day,
  - Women should drink no more than 2 or 3 units per day.
- People prescribed antidepressants, sedatives, analgesics or drugs for epilepsy should avoid alcohol.
- Alcohol is a depressant. This is why drinking too much often leads to impaired judgement, slurring of the speech, a tendency to violent behaviour and loss of short-term memory.
- As alcohol irritates the stomach, heavy drinking can cause sickness, nausea, and sometimes diarrhoea.
- Alcohol has a dehydrating effect, which is the main reason why excessive drinking can lead to a hangover.
- An estimated 17 million working days are lost each year due to people missing work owing to the effects of alcohol (National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy report 2003/4)

### THE SHORT TERM HEALTH RISKS OF ALCOHOL INCLUDE:

- Anxiety
- Sexual difficulties such as impotence
- Impaired judgement leading to accidents and injuries
- Slowed breathing and heartbeat
- Loss of consciousness
- Suffocation through choking on your own vomit
- Potentially fatal alcohol poisoning – liver disease

### DRINKING ALCOHOL:

- Affects your judgement and reasoning
- Slows down your reactions
- Upsets your sense of balance and coordination
- Impairs your vision and hearing
- Makes you lose concentration
- Makes you drowsy
- Impairs sleep quality/disrupts sleep patterns

- The current legal limit for driving (2014) is only 80 mg of alcohol in 100 ml of blood.
- There is no reliable gauge as to how many units can be drunk before reaching this limit as many factors (including weight, food consumption, gender and speed of drinking influence blood alcohol levels.

- One 175ml (standard) glass of wine = 2 units
- One 275ml bottle of Alco-pop = 1.5 units
- 1 pint of normal strength lager = 2 units
- A single 25ml measure of spirits = 1 unit

## The Morning After Calculator

(Information from BRAKE – road safety charity)

### IT'S ALL ABOUT THE TIMING:

Nearly 1 in 6 convicted drink-drivers are caught the morning after drinking. Questions to ask yourself.

- How much have I drunk?
- When did I stop drinking?
- When do I plan to drive?

### Calculate how long it takes to be alcohol free – then add an hour!

On top of the times given below, you need to add an hour as this is how long it takes for alcohol to be absorbed **into** your blood stream. The times below are only rough guides.

**\*It takes about 1 hour for your body to rid itself of each unit of alcohol**, but it can take much longer. It depends on several factors including how healthy you are and how much you've eaten. Eating a big meal means alcohol is absorbed more slowly - so it takes longer to sober up.

### PINTS OF BEER OR CIDER

#### 4% beers and ciders

Average strength beers and ciders like Fosters and Guinness are 2 hour pints. Each pint takes at least 2 hours to leave your blood stream from when you stop drinking.



**5.5% beers and ciders** like Stella, Kronenberg and Strongbow are 3 hour pints. Each pint takes at least 3 hours to leave your blood stream.

**Drink 4 pints of Stella and you can't drive for at least 13 hours from finishing your last pint. If you finish at midnight, you aren't safe until after 1pm the next day.**

### MEASURES OF SPIRITS

It doesn't matter what mixer you use. The alcohol takes the same amount of time to leave your system whether your vodka's just on ice or in a large glass of orange juice.

Pub measures vary, 25ml (one unit) used to be standard, but 35ml is now more common.

A 25ml shot is a 1 hour drink. A 35ml shot is 1.5 hour drink. A 70ml double is a 3 hour drink – the same as a pint of Stella.



**Drink four 70ml doubles and you can't drive for 13 hours – that's 1pm the next day if you drank your last double at midnight.**

### GLASSES OF WINE

There are several different wine glass sizes and wine comes in different strengths, from 12%-15%. One 250ml glass of 15% wine is a 4 hour drink.



**Drink a bottle of 15% wine – that's just three 250ml glasses - and you can't drive for 13 hours - 1pm the next day if you finish at midnight.**

**If you need help to reduce your alcohol intake, start by talking to your GP**

**Men v. Women:** It takes exactly the same amount of time for women to lose alcohol from their blood stream as men. Both men & women's livers work at the same speed.