



COMING FOR A DRINK?



Alcohol - friend or enemy?

What alcohol does to your body.

What to do if you have a drink problem.

By ROSLYN BAND



ACCESS TO HEALTH PROJECT

COMING FOR A DRINK?

by

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Coming for a Drink?

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COMING FOR A DRINK?

More people with learning difficulties have the chance to drink now. They have more control over their own money. They go out more. Drinking alcohol when you go out can be fun. But there is a down side to alcohol too.



- We need to know how much drink we can handle.
- Drink can be a problem for some people.



- They can find it hard to control when they drink, and how much they drink.
- This book tells you more about what alcohol does to your body.
- There is good advice about drinking sensibly.
- It also tells you what to do if you think you have a problem with drink.



Coming for a drink?

A lot of people enjoy going out to the pub for a drink.

It's somewhere to go, it's usually not far away, it's a place to meet your friends, or make new ones. Some people like the atmosphere. Going to the pub can make you feel part of the area you live in. Maybe it makes you feel just like everyone else.

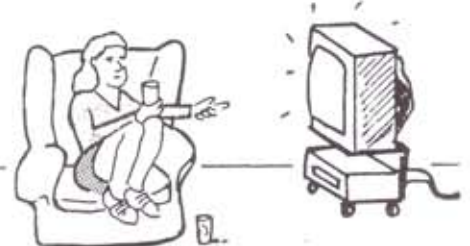


What do people drink in pubs?

There are a lot of drinks to choose from. Many of the drinks have something called alcohol in them. But you don't have to drink alcohol, there are other drinks too.



Of course, people don't drink just in pubs. Some people only drink alcohol when they go to parties, or go out for a meal. Some people like a drink at home.



Drinks that have alcohol



Beer



Guinness



Lager



Shandy



Cider



Hooch



Babycham



Wine



Champagne



Sherry
(this is a strong wine)

Vodka
Whisky
Gin
Southern Comfort
Bailey's
(these are called spirits)



Alcohol units

Some drinks contain more alcohol than others.

People use the word **unit** to say how much alcohol there is in a drink.



A glass of wine
1 unit



A pint of ordinary beer
2 units



A small measure of spirits
(whisky, gin, vodka)
1 unit

How much alcohol?

A small drink of spirits can have a lot of alcohol in it, because it is a strong drink.

A small glass of vodka has as much alcohol as:



There are many different beers and lagers. Even 'low alcohol beer' has some alcohol in it. Some beers and lagers are very strong.

The ones that are called 'Pils', 'Super', 'Premium' or 'Extra' are usually the strongest.

For example:



A can of
Whitbread
Best Bitter
less than 2 units



A can of
Holsten
Pils lager
about 3 units



A can of
Tennants
Super
4 units

Safe drinking



How much can someone safely drink?

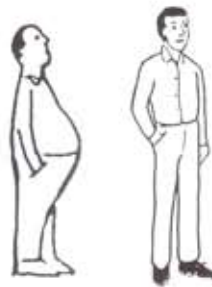
- Are they on medication which is affected by alcohol?



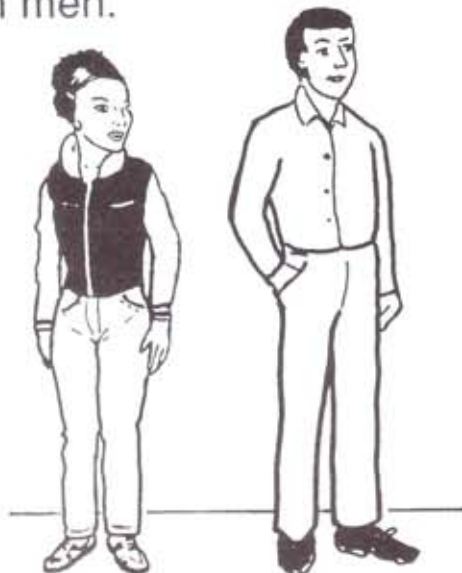
- Are they a man or a woman?



- How heavy are they?



Men and women have different limits with alcohol.
Women usually get affected more than men by the same amount of alcohol.
This is because women's bodies cope with alcohol in a different way to men.
Women are often smaller than men.



Safe limits



Women



2 or 3 units a day



Men



3 or 4 units a day

But it may be less for you, if you are not used to alcohol.

Know your limits and don't be afraid to say when you have had enough.



Advice about sensible drinking



If you stick to sensible limits when you drink, then you should not come to any harm.



Remember:

- If you are on medication, check with your doctor that it is O.K to drink.
- Have something to eat before you drink.
- Know your limit.
Remember this when you start drinking.
- If you want to slow down, have a drink without alcohol, like coke, lemonade, mineral water, fruit juice.
- Try to have two days in the week when you don't drink alcohol.
This gives your body a chance to recover.



M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
		X	X			

Why do people drink?

Some people drink because their friends do.
Or they see adverts which make it look a cool thing to do.



What some people say:



We always drink at celebrations, like parties, weddings, Christmas and New Year.



Alcohol makes me feel more confident.

Alcohol helps me to relax.



Alcohol makes me feel good.



I don't feel so shy.



I helps me to talk to people.



People may drink at other times too.

Alcohol may help you forget you are lonely.

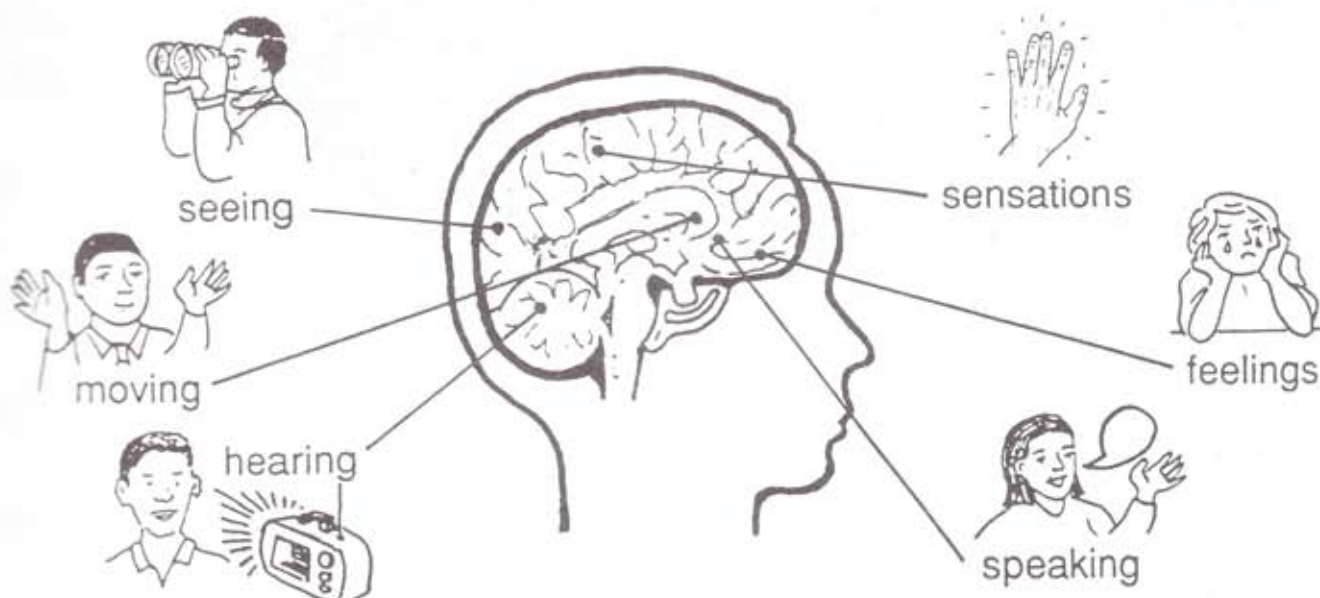
Alcohol may help you to cope with frustration and stress.

Alcohol may help you forget your worries.

Drinking can be something to do if you're bored.

What alcohol does: 1

Alcohol can change the way we feel because it affects the brain.
The brain controls everything the body does.
That means moving, talking, seeing, feelings, thinking.



Alcohol may seem to make us lively.
But alcohol depresses the brain.
At first you feel high but then you get low.
At first you feel cheerful, but then as you
drink more you start losing control.



People may get silly, or very sad, or aggressive. Then confused.
Then drunk.



Being drunk means:

- it's hard to talk
- it's hard to think
- it's hard to walk
- it's hard to see straight
- you may feel sick and throw up
- you may wet yourself.



The bad side of alcohol



It costs a lot.



It can get people into arguments, even fights.



It can put you at risk - people may take advantage of you or they may abuse you.



Or you may do things you regret afterwards.
Alcohol can make us feel less inhibited about sex.
People may not remember to use a condom.

It can make you neglect yourself.
You may stop eating properly or washing.

Drink can become the most important thing in life.



What alcohol does: 2

If you drink too much over a long time, it can make you very ill.
But it doesn't start like that.

What it feels like the next day:

You might have a hangover.
That means.

- a bad headache
- feel sick
- diarrhoea
- stomach pains



Have a rest and drink plenty of water.
That will help you to feel better.
It's also best not to drink any alcohol
for a day or two.

M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su



When you have a drink too often:

- affects your work
- affects your friendships -
you might get into arguments
- run out of money



If you drink a lot more than the safe limits and for a long time:

- lose weight because you don't eat properly
- feel depressed, maybe even have blackouts
- get edgy, even violent
- shaky hands, numbness
- get run down and feel ill
- get colds and infections more easily.



Do you have a problem with drink?

Having a drink problem means that the bad side of alcohol is affecting you or your life. Things like:

- ☐ your health
- ☐ what you do
- ☐ your family and friends
- ☐ other relationships
- ☐ drink is taking too much money
- ☐ you need alcohol to feel all right - it's hard to do without.



Are you dependent on alcohol ?

Some people are said to be **dependent** on alcohol.
They need to drink to cope with certain feelings.
They are used to drinking at certain times.

Their body can get so used to alcohol, that
when they do not drink they feel really bad.
They can't sleep.
They feel irritable.
They may feel shaky.



The more dependent someone is, the worse it gets.
These people are sometimes called 'alcoholics' or 'problem drinkers'.

Do you know how much you drink?

Try these things:

- Keep a 'Drink Diary'.
- Count how many drinks you have each day, and what they are.
- Make a list of the people you are with when you drink.
- What sort of feelings make you want to have a drink?

M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
	 	X	X	 	 	



Do this with someone if it helps.

What makes people drink too much?

Some people who have a drink problem, may have a mother or father who drinks a lot. Perhaps they saw how their parent coped with their feelings by drinking. Perhaps their brain or their body is affected by alcohol in the same way.

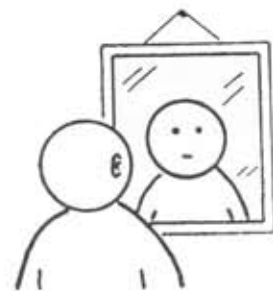


Some people get used to coping with life by drinking. If a person becomes dependent on alcohol in their mind and in their body, it can be very hard to control their drinking. This is a bit like being ill.



What next?

So do you have a drink problem?
Did some of the things you read in
this book sound like you?



Now you need to make a decision.
Can you cut down?
Do you need to stop altogether?
Be honest with yourself.



Where to get help

- 1) If you want help to cut down or to stop drinking, you can go to your doctor (your G.P).

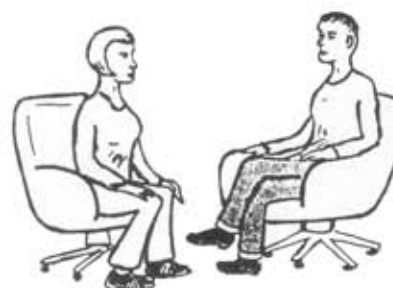


- 2) If you want to talk to someone who doesn't know you or your family, you could ring **Drinkline 0345 32 02 02.**

They are counsellors who understand about drinking. You can ring Monday to Friday, between 11 a.m and 11 p.m.



- 3) Perhaps some of your feelings feel too difficult to live with. Getting help to talk about those feelings would be better than drinking. You could talk to a counsellor who knows about alcohol and what it does.



There are alcohol counselling centres in most areas. Look under 'Alcohol Advice' in your phone book. They give people support, and they are private. They can help you think about what you want to do - if you want to stop drinking or if you want to cut down.

- 4) Alcoholics Anonymous is an organisation for people who are trying not to drink at all. They hold big meetings where people can talk or just listen.



Look in the phone book for their telephone number.

- 5) Al Anon can help you if it is a friend of yours or someone in your family who drinks. Their number is: 0171 403 0888.



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