

Health Bulletin

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

#83 in a series of Health Bulletins on issues of pressing interest to all New Yorkers



**EXCESSIVE DRINKING
IS DANGEROUS.**

Stop drinking while you're still thinking.



• Available in Spanish and Chinese: call 311 or visit nyc.gov/health
• Disponible en español: llame al 311 o visite nyc.gov/health
• 需要中文服務 - 可電 311 或造訪網址 nyc.gov/health



How Much Is Too Much?

For men:

- **Excessive drinking** is defined as 5 or more drinks in a short period of time, such as a 2-hour period, or
- More than 14 drinks in a week.

For women and people 65 and older:

- **Excessive drinking** is defined as 4 or more drinks in a short period of time, such as a 2-hour period, or
- More than 7 drinks in a week.

What counts as 1 drink?



A 12-oz. glass, bottle,
or can of beer or ale



A 5-oz. glass of wine,
or a 3.5-oz. glass of
fortified wine



A 1.5-oz. "shot" of distilled
liquor or brandy (straight
or in a mixed drink)

Excessive Drinking Is Dangerous

It increases the risk of many problems.

- Cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver
- Hepatitis
- Osteoporosis
- Hypertension
- Enlarged heart or weakening of the heart muscle
- Cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, breast, and colon
- Weakened immune system
- Pneumonia and other infections
- Accidents and injuries
- Committing or being the victim of acts of violence
- Depression, dementia, and other mental disorders
- Suicide

Sometimes Any Drinking Can Be Harmful

It is safest to avoid alcohol altogether if you:

- Will be driving or operating machinery
- Are pregnant or trying to become pregnant
- Are caring for children or others
- Have a personal history of alcohol or drug dependence
- Are taking prescription or over-the-counter medications that interact with alcohol
- Are under legal drinking age (21)
 - Children and adolescents who drink are at much higher risk for motor-vehicle crashes and alcohol-related brain damage.
 - The younger people are when they start drinking, the more likely they are to have problems with alcohol use as adults.

Be extra cautious about drinking if you have:

- A family history of alcohol or drug dependence
- Certain illnesses, such as diabetes, congestive heart failure, or long-term stomach, pancreas, or liver problems – even one drink a day can accelerate liver damage in people with hepatitis
- A history of depression
- A psychiatric illness

What Is Alcohol Dependence?

It is a health condition that often gets worse unless it is addressed.

Symptoms include:

- **Craving** – a strong urge to drink
- **Loss of control** – being unable to stop drinking
- **Physical dependence** – withdrawal symptoms (nausea, sweating, shakiness, anxiety)
- **Increased tolerance** – the need to drink greater amounts of alcohol to feel its effects
- **Blackouts** – forgetting what happens when drinking



Problem Drinking Is Treatable

Many treatment options are available, including medications.

- Looking honestly at your own drinking and its effects on you and others can be difficult. But honesty is usually the first and most important step in getting help.
- For help and information, talk to your doctor or call LifeNet (see **More Information**).

Don't give up!

People can and do get better, every day.
Recovery is possible.

More Information and Help

- **For help with alcohol or drug use problems:** call 311 or LifeNet (800-543-3638)
- **Spanish LifeNet:** 877-AYUDESE (877-298-3373)
- **Asian LifeNet (Mandarin, Cantonese and Korean):** 877-990-8585
- **Alcoholics Anonymous:** www.nyintergroup.org or 212-647-1680
- **National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information:** www.samhsa.gov or 1-800-729-6686.

**DIAL
311**

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DO YOU HAVE A DRINKING PROBLEM?*

Check the box next to your answer to each question.

Write your score for each question in the 'Score' column, and add up the total.

For the definition of a 'drink,' see 'What counts as 1 drink?'

	Over the past 12 months:	0	1	2	3	4	Score
1	How often have you had a drink that contained alcohol?	Never <input type="checkbox"/>	Monthly or less <input type="checkbox"/>	2 to 4 times a month <input type="checkbox"/>	2 to 3 times a week <input type="checkbox"/>	4 or more times a week <input type="checkbox"/>	
2	On a typical drinking day, how many drinks did you have?	1 or 2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 or 4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 or 6 <input type="checkbox"/>	7 to 9 <input type="checkbox"/>	10 or more <input type="checkbox"/>	
3	How often did you have 6 or more drinks on one occasion?	Never <input type="checkbox"/>	Less than monthly <input type="checkbox"/>	Monthly <input type="checkbox"/>	Weekly <input type="checkbox"/>	Daily or almost daily <input type="checkbox"/>	
Total Score							

WHAT YOUR SCORE MEANS

Your drinking could be harmful if your total score is:

- **3 or higher** for women and people 65 or older
- **4 or higher** for men

Talk to your doctor, or see More Information and Help.

* Adapted from: AUDIT-C, a brief version of the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test. Available at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1097/01.ALC.0000164374.32229.A2/pdf>



**New York City Department of
Health and Mental Hygiene**

125 Worth Street, Room 1047, CN 33
New York, N.Y. 10013

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor
Thomas Farley, M.D., M.P.H. Commissioner

Bureau of Communications

Geoffrey Cowley, Associate Commissioner
Cortnie Lowe, M.F.A., Executive Editor

Prepared in cooperation with:

Division of Mental Hygiene
Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Use
Prevention, Care and Treatment



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**For Non-Emergency NYC Services
Telephone Interpretation in 170 Languages**