

The background of the entire image is a deep blue. On the left, there is a large, detailed illustration of a beer glass filled with a dark liquid and a thick, white head of foam. On the right, there is a tall, slender wine glass partially filled with a light-colored liquid. Both glasses are rendered with white outlines and some internal shading to give them a three-dimensional appearance.

# Mindful Drinking: **How To Reduce Your Risk of Alcohol-Related Harms**



Alcohol is one of the most available substances in the United States. Many people can drink alcohol without negative outcomes. However, nearly half of New Yorkers who drink alcohol report heavy drinking (long-term drinking) or binge drinking (short-term, high-volume drinking). Both types of drinking can increase the risk of serious health issues, injuries or accidents, and committing or experiencing acts of violence.

Read this booklet to learn more about:

- The effects of alcohol
- How to assess how much alcohol you are drinking
- How to practice mindful drinking to lower your risk of alcohol-related harms
- How to find treatment and support



# Assessing Your Drinking

It can be unclear how much alcohol counts as one drink. This graphic shows how much alcohol is in some standard drinks:

**12 fluid ounces of regular beer**



About  
5% alcohol

**8 to 9 fluid ounces of malt liquor (shown in a 12-ounce glass)**



About  
7% alcohol

**5 fluid ounces of table wine**



About  
12% alcohol

**One 1 1/2 fluid ounce shot of a distilled spirit (such as vodka, whiskey or tequila)**



About  
40% alcohol

Adapted from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism ([niaaa.nih.gov/alcohols-effects-health/overview-alcohol-consumption/what-standard-drink](https://niaaa.nih.gov/alcohols-effects-health/overview-alcohol-consumption/what-standard-drink))

## Do you know how many standard drinks you are consuming?

- One bottle of wine contains five standard drinks.
- One pint of beer contains 1 1/3 standard drinks.
- One “fifth” (750 milliliters) of spirits contains 17 standard drinks.
- Many mixed drinks, such as martinis or cosmopolitans, contain two or three standard drinks.

# Is your alcohol use putting you at risk?

Understanding your alcohol use can help you determine your risk of negative outcomes. Write in your score for each question below and add up the total:

In the past year:	0	1	2	3	4	Score
How often have you had an alcoholic drink?	Never	Once per month or less	Two to four times per month	Two to three times per week	Four or more times per week	
How many alcoholic drinks do you usually have on days when you drink alcohol?	One or two	Three or four	Five or six	Seven to nine	10 or more	
How often did you have six or more alcoholic drinks on one occasion?	Never	Less than once per month	Once per month	Once per week	Daily or almost daily	

Total Score:

Your alcohol use could be harming your health if your score is:

- 4 or higher (for men)
- 3 or higher (for women and people age 65 or older)

From AUDIT-C, a brief version of the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test

To reduce your risk of alcohol-related harms, stay within these drinking limits:

Men	Women
No more than <b>four</b> drinks per day and no more than <b>14</b> drinks per week	No more than <b>three</b> drinks per day and no more than <b>seven</b> drinks per week

Adapted from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism ([rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov](https://www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov))

Research is limited on how drinking limits should be set for people who are transgender, gender-nonconforming or intersex. Due to sex-based differences in how people process alcohol, these limits are organized by sex assigned at birth.

## Alcohol-Related Harms

The risk of alcohol-related harms depends on how much and often you drink. Both heavy and binge drinking can harm your health.

Heavy drinking is defined as, on average over a 30-day period, having:

- Two alcoholic drinks per day (for men)
- One alcoholic drink per day (for women)

Binge drinking is when your body's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) level reaches 0.08% or higher, which usually occurs after:

- Five or more alcoholic drinks over two hours (for men)
- Four or more alcoholic drinks over two hours (for women)

Your BAC might be affected by other factors, such as your age, height, weight or other drugs you have taken that day.

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### What are the harms of heavy and binge drinking?

Short-term harms include:

- Accidents or injuries
- Committing or experiencing acts of violence, such as homicide, suicide, intimate partner violence or sexual assault
- Unsafe sexual activity, which can result in sexually transmitted infections or unplanned pregnancy

Long-term harms include:

- Mouth, throat, esophagus, breast or colon cancer
- Chronic health conditions, such as hypertension, liver disease or heart disease
- Mental health disorders, such as depression or dementia
- Alcohol use disorder (AUD)

Drinking alcohol while taking other drugs can increase your risk of injury or overdose.

People who engage in heavy or binge drinking are at risk of alcohol withdrawal if they suddenly stop drinking. Alcohol withdrawal can be life-threatening and require medical care and monitoring. Symptoms include tremors, increased pulse and blood pressure, insomnia, anxiety, sweating, nausea and vomiting, or seizures.

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## What is AUD?

AUD is a chronic health condition where a person is unable to stop or control their alcohol use. Signs of AUD include:

- A strong, irresistible urge to drink
- Being unable to stop drinking once you start
- Blackouts
- Needing to drink greater amounts of alcohol to feel its effects
- Alcohol withdrawal symptoms

AUD can be treated with medication, counseling or mutual support groups.

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## Who should avoid drinking alcohol?

**People younger than age 21** who drink alcohol are at higher risk of AUD (especially if they start before age 15), unsafe sexual activity, drinking and driving, and committing or experiencing acts of violence. It is also illegal for people younger than age 21 to drink alcohol in the United States.

**Pregnant people** should avoid drinking alcohol to prevent fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs), which can lead to severe learning, behavioral and developmental issues during childhood. Although not every alcohol-exposed pregnancy leads to an FASD, it is safest to avoid drinking alcohol while pregnant.

**People with a liver disease**, such as hepatitis, who drink alcohol are at higher risk of further damaging their liver or other liver diseases, including fibrosis and cancer. It is safest for people with liver disease to avoid drinking or reduce their use to protect their liver.

## Reducing Your Risk

Even small changes to your alcohol use can reduce your risk of alcohol-related harms. Different strategies work for different people. Here are some mindful drinking tips you can try:

- Stay within the drinking limits on Page 4.
- Note how much you drink and the places and situations where you drink more.
- Write down the maximum number of drinks you want to have during an occasion before you start drinking.
- Space out your alcoholic drinks over time. Have a nonalcoholic drink, such as seltzer or water, in between each alcoholic drink.
- Eat food while drinking.
- Participate in activities that do not revolve around drinking.
- Avoid people and places that urge you to drink.
- Get support from friends or professionals on setting and achieving your goals.
- Talk to a health care provider if you are using alcohol in response to stress or mental health conditions, concerned about your drinking, or want to learn more about AUD, including treatment. For help finding a provider, call **311** or 844-NYC-4NYC (844-692-4692).

# Resources

To learn more about and find services related to alcohol use, visit:

- [nyc.gov/alcoholanddrugs](https://nyc.gov/alcoholanddrugs)
- [oasas.ny.gov/recovery-starts-here](https://oasas.ny.gov/recovery-starts-here)
- [rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov](https://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov)
- [cdc.gov/alcohol](https://cdc.gov/alcohol)

Contact 988 for free, confidential crisis counseling, mental health and substance use support, and referrals to care. Call or text 988 or chat at **[nyc.gov/988](https://nyc.gov/988)**. Text and chat services are available in English and Spanish, and counselors are available by phone 24/7 in more than 200 languages.