

Have a little less

A guide for cutting down on alcohol



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This guide is for men and women over the age of 18. People with an addiction to alcohol and young people under the age of 18 should not drink alcohol at all.

This information has been compiled from research and development projects.



Should you make changes?

There is a definite correlation between the use of alcohol and health risks: **The more alcohol consumed, the more harm done.** This guide is meant to help you evaluate if you should cut down or stop drinking altogether.

Over 600,000 Finns exceed the risk limit in alcohol consumption, though many don't realize it. If you are concerned about your drinking, **you can change your habits and cut down.** Many people have succeeded in doing so.

Assess your situation

It's a good idea to assess how much you actually drink and to consider the health risks. You could be drinking far more than you realize.

Estimate how many units of alcohol you normally drink during the week, or at any one time.

Compare your consumption with the risk limits.

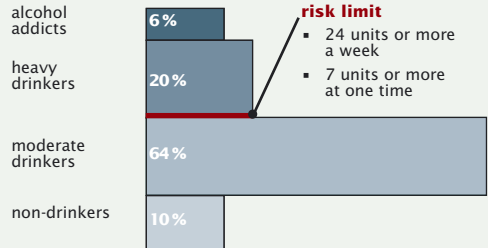
If you find that you regularly exceed the risk limits, you should consider cutting down.

You can often prevent health problems just by cutting down to an amount below risk levels.

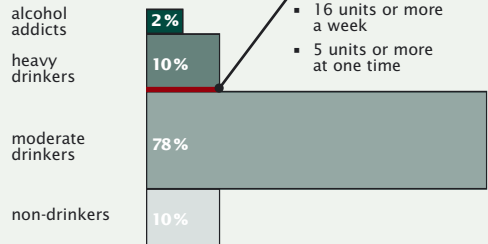
Consumer groups

Alcohol consumption of the working-age population in Finland:

MEN



WOMEN



Which group are you in?

Estimate your intake in alcohol units

One unit equals about 12 g (or about 15 ml) of pure alcohol.

1 unit =



- = 1 bottle (33 cl) of medium beer (max 4.7%) or cider or long drink of equal strength



- = one glass (12 cl) of table wine
- = 8 cl of fortified wine (e.g. sherry or madeira)



- = 2 cl of **80%** spirits
- = 3 cl of **60%** spirits
- = 4 cl of c. **40%** spirits

Examples of unit count

one bottle (33 cl) of strong (5–8%) beer = **1,3** units

one pint (50 cl) of medium (max 4.7%) beer = **1,5** units

one pint (50 cl) of strong (5–8%) beer = **2** units

one bottle (75cl) of table wine = **6** units

one bottle (50 cl) of c. 40% spirits = **12** units

one bottle (50 cl) of 80% spirits = **24** units

12 bottles (33 cl) of medium beer, cider or long drink = **12** units

table wine bag-in-box (2 l) = **16** units

Risk limits



If you drink in moderation, as most people do, your alcohol consumption is below the risk limit.

Alcohol consumption that continually exceeds risk limits can cause or aggravate illnesses and symptoms that may be difficult to identify as alcohol-related. Even occasional binge drinking can cause you to become more accident-prone, for example.

The risk limits are based on research about how the amount of alcohol consumed correlates with significant increases in disease and death.

These should not be understood as safe limits. Even moderate consumption increases risk to some extent.

Compare your alcohol consumption with the risk limits given on the following page.

Risk limits

for healthy medium-sized

men

WEEKLY CONSUMPTION

24 units a week

= 24 bottles of medium beer or

= 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ bottles of table wine or

= 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ bottles of spirits

ONE-TIME CONSUMPTION

7 units at one time every week

= 7 bottles of medium beer or

= 1 bottle of table wine or

= $\frac{1}{2}$ bottle of spirits

Risk limits

for healthy medium-sized

women

WEEKLY CONSUMPTION

16 units a week

= 16 bottles of medium beer or

= 2 $\frac{1}{3}$ bottles of table wine or

= 1 $\frac{1}{5}$ bottles of spirits

ONE-TIME CONSUMPTION

5 units at one time every week

= 5 bottles of medium beer or

= $\frac{2}{3}$ bottle of table wine or

= $\frac{1}{3}$ bottle of spirits

Cut down or quit?

If you are drinking over the risk limit, you must first decide if you want to cut down or quit drinking completely. Then make a plan to accomplish this. Here are some options:

- Stop drinking completely for a few weeks, then teach yourself to drink in moderation.
- Cut down immediately and beware of not gradually increasing your drinking.
- Cut down in stages, for example by one third to start with, then continue cutting down until you have reached your goal.
- Quit drinking immediately and stay sober.

Stop drinking if

- you are **pregnant**
- you have **a disease or injury** that drinking could make worse
- you have **withdrawal symptoms**, such as severe shaking
- you **cannot control your drinking** once you get started
- you are **violent or quarrelsome** when drunk.

Payback from cutting down



Long-term alcohol consumption over the risk limits is harmful to the human body. Have you ever considered that some of your ailments or problems might be alcohol-related? You can benefit in many ways by cutting down:

- Weight control becomes easier
- Less stomach disorders
- Lower blood pressure
- Lower risk of arrhythmia

- Less accidents
- Better resistance to illness
- Better sleep
- Improved personal relationships
- More energy at work.

Continual heavy drinking can lead to alcohol addiction and severe organ damage.

How to cut down

- Don't drink alcohol to quench thirst.
 - Alternate with non-alcoholic drinks.
 - Use non-alcoholic mixers with spirits.
 - Don't chug, sip slowly.
 - Measure drinks so you know how much you have had.
 - Decide when you will start and/or stop drinking.
 - Have something to eat when you drink.
- Avoid situations where you tend to drink too much.
 - Don't drink daily.
 - Don't drink out of habit: make a conscious decision with every drink.
 - Don't drink to cope: drinking doesn't solve anything — it just makes things worse.
 - Learn to say no. Saying no is an important part of cutting down. You don't need to explain yourself. Just say: "Not now, thank you."
 - If you don't make it the first time, don't give up: think through what caused you to relapse and how you can prevent it from happening again.

Keep a unit diary

Keep a unit diary to monitor your drinking habits and to track the goals you have set for yourself. Note down:

- the days that you did not drink
- how many units you had on the days you did drink.

Keep the diary for at least two weeks. If after a month or two you still drink as much as before, consider quitting altogether.

Unit Diary

1 unit =  or  or 

WEEK	24	TOTAL
MON		
TUE	111	4
WED		
THU	###	5
FRI	11	2
SAT	###11	7
SUN	11	2
WEEK TOTAL		20

WEEK		TOTAL
MON		
TUE		
WED		
THU		
FRI		
SAT		
SUN		
WEEK TOTAL		

Unit Diary

1 unit =



or



or



WEEK	TOTAL
MON	
TUE	
WED	
THU	
FRI	
SAT	
SUN	
WEEK TOTAL	

WEEK	TOTAL
MON	
TUE	
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WEEK	TOTAL
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WEEK TOTAL	

WEEK	TOTAL
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WEEK TOTAL	

Unit Diary

1 unit =



or



or



WEEK	TOTAL
MON	
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WEEK TOTAL	

WEEK	TOTAL
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WEEK	TOTAL
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WEEK TOTAL	

WEEK	TOTAL
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FRI	
SAT	
SUN	
WEEK TOTAL	



For more information and support online:

- www.paihdelinkki.fi/english

You can get professional help from

- health centre nurses and doctors
- occupational health care services
- A-clinic units.

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Brochures of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
2006:10eng

ISSN 1236-2123

ISBN 978-952-00-2402-4 (pb)

ISBN 978-952-00-2403-1 (PDF)

To order the brochure, please contact:
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**Alcohol
Programme**

2004-2007