

Pendeen Health Matters

In this edition of 'Health Matters' we are focussing on alcohol and potentially drinking too much

Alcohol

We have all heard hundreds of times that it is not good to drink too much alcohol and about the risks associated with it. Despite this a lot of us still drink too much and are not always aware of the short and long term harm it can do to us.

How much is too much?

All alcohol has an effect on us and we often enjoy the more relaxed feeling it can give, especially in social situations. In reality we should not be drinking more than 14 units a week. This is

- 6 pints of normal-strength lager/cider/beer (ABV 3.6%)
- 5 x 250ml glasses of wine (ABV 12%)

Stronger alcohol or bigger glasses will mean more units. See here for more info on how much alcohol there is in what you drink. <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-advice/>

If you're pregnant or trying to become pregnant, then the safest approach is not to drink alcohol at all to keep the risks to your baby to a minimum.

Some good news is that there are more and better alcohol free options available today, so it is worth looking at them to help ensure you don't overindulge.

The short-term effects of drinking

Regular or frequent drinking means drinking most days and weeks. The risk to your health is increased by drinking on a regular or frequent basis.

The short term risks are:

- loss of personal items like phones, wallets or keys
- accidents or injuries requiring hospital treatment such as head injuries
- violent behaviour or being a victim of violence
- unprotected sex which can lead to unplanned pregnancy or Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's).
- alcohol poisoning (vomiting / fits / unconscious)

*The next
issue of
'Health
Matters'
will be sent
out at the
end of
August*

The longer-term effects of drinking

Persistent use of alcohol and drinking at high levels increases your risk of serious health conditions including

- Heart disease / stroke
- Liver disease
- Many cancers, e.g. liver, bowel, mouth, breast
- Brain damage leading to problems with thinking & memory

Dependent drinkers

If someone is dependent on drinking it usually affects their quality of life and relationships, but they may not find it easy to recognise this and external support may be required.

Am I or is someone I know drinking too much?

Someone may be misusing alcohol if they feel they should cut down on drinking, other people have criticised their drinking, they feel bad or guilty about how much they drink, they need a drink first thing in the morning to steady their nerves or get rid of a hangover.

Other signs are that someone regularly drinks over 14 units a week, they are sometimes unable to remember what happened, they fail to do what was expected of them e.g. miss appointments or work because they are drunk or hungover.

How to get help

If you're worried about your drinking or someone else's, then a good first step is to speak to a GP. They can discuss the services and treatments available.

As well as the NHS, there are a number of charities and support groups across the UK that provide support and advice for people with an alcohol misuse problem.

You may want to contact:

Drinking national alcohol helpline – 0330 123 1110

Alcohol change UK. - <https://alcoholchange.org.uk/>

Alcoholics Anonymous – 0800 917 650 <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/>