

YOURHEALTH

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Duradiamond
Building Healthy Business



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IT'S THE FESTIVE SEASON!

How much alcohol can I drink safely?

The UK Chief Medical Officer advises:

- Men and women should drink no more than 14 units of alcohol per week
- When consuming alcohol, it should be in moderate amounts with units spread over three or more days a week
- A good way to help to cut down on your drinking is to have several drink-free days a week.

How many units are you drinking? Check it out at www.alcoholchange.org.uk/alcohol-facts/unit-calculator

Too much alcohol can cause many problems. If you think you may have a problem, speak to your GP or OH provider.

And take care following Christmas parties - don't drink and drive.



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I DRINK?

When you drink alcohol, it's absorbed into the bloodstream from the stomach and intestines. It then goes through the liver, before circulating around the whole body. The highest concentration of alcohol is in the blood flowing through the liver.

Liver cells contain chemicals (enzymes) that process alcohol. The enzymes break down alcohol into other chemicals, which in turn are then broken down into water and carbon dioxide. These are then passed out in the urine and in your breath. The liver cells can process only a certain amount of alcohol per hour. So, if you drink alcohol faster than your liver can deal with it, the level of alcohol in your bloodstream rises.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Your liver and body can usually cope with drinking a small amount of alcohol.

However, some recent research finds that any amount of alcohol can increase your risk of cancer.

If you drink heavily you have an increased risk of developing:

- Serious liver problems (alcoholic liver disease) and some stomach disorders
- Severe inflammation of the pancreas (pancreatitis)
- Mental health problems, including depression and anxiety
- Sexual difficulties such as impotence
- Muscle and heart muscle disease

- High blood pressure
- Damage to nervous tissue
- Accidents - drinking alcohol is associated with a higher risk of accidents
- Some cancers - see earlier comment (mouth, throat and breast)
- Obesity (alcohol has lots of calories)
- Damage to your unborn baby in pregnant women
- Alcohol dependence (addiction).

Look at www.alcoholchange.org.uk/alcohol-facts/fact-sheets for how alcohol may affect you and your family.



COLD WEATHER WORKING

It's cold out there!

The UK winter can have a serious impact on an employee's health when working outdoors, if they do not consider or manage the risks.

Cold, wintery weather can cause reduced grip strength, aggravation of some medical conditions & the occurrence of cold-related emergencies.

Top tips for working outdoors:

- Make sure you wear appropriate clothing
 - several layers of loose clothing to ensure better insulation and any other cold weather protection gear you are given
- Protect your ears, face, hands and feet in very cold weather
- Use mobile facilities (hut, rest areas) provided for warming up
- Drink warm fluids such as soup or hot drinks
- Make sure you have regular rest breaks
- Avoid touching cold metal surfaces with bare skin
- Make sure your work equipment is prepared and safe, e.g. complete vehicle checks before driving
- Monitor your physical condition and that of your co-workers.

HAVS AWARENESS

Hand-arm vibration (HAVS) is caused by the over exposure to vibration in the hands, fingers, wrists and arms. If you use hand-held power tools, be aware that over-use can cause this disabling condition, which could affect your ability to work and enjoy a normal home and social life.

HAVS affects the nerves, blood vessels, muscles and joints of the hand, wrist and arm.

It can become severely disabling if ignored.

HAVS includes vibration white finger, which can cause severe pain in the affected fingers.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

- Intermittent tingling and numbness in the fingers
- Sometimes not being able to feel things with your fingers
- Sometimes loss of strength in your hands
- In the cold and wet, the tips of your fingers typically going white then red and being painful on recovery (vibration white finger).

If you have any concerns, speak to your GP or OH service.

