

SENSIBLE DRINKING GUIDELINES (last updated January 2012)

Recommendations on drinking levels considered “minimum risk” for men and women exist in many countries globally. Official guidelines on alcohol consumption are usually produced by a government department, public health bodies, medical associations or non-governmental organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO).

- Official drinking guidelines are issued by governments and public health entities to advise on levels of alcohol consumption considered “safe”, “responsible,” or “low-risk”. They do not apply to those under the legal drinking age or to pregnant women. Those on medication or with a history of illness should consult their GP for specific advice. Some guidelines suggest one or two alcohol free days a week. Visit the websites cited for full country guidelines.
- Information included in guidelines offers recommendations on low-risk drinking levels for men and women, may also define a standard drink or unit which differ in each country) and offer advice to particular populations deemed to be at an increased risk for harm.

Standard drinks summary

Official “drinks” or “units” generally contain between 8 and 14 grams of pure ethanol, although the measure varies among countries. - there is no consensus internationally on a single standard drink size.

Means of tracking how much alcohol people are drinking can be a useful tool for those serving alcohol, as well as for those consuming it. In a number of countries around the world, drinks are generally served in well-defined amounts at restaurants and bars. From a commercial perspective, this allows servers or retailers to monitor how much alcohol is being dispensed and ensures that drink sizes do not vary significantly across venues. For licensing authorities, standard measures are a useful tool for tracking sales. The sizes of servings are largely shaped by local customs and culture.

The strengths of different types of beverage alcohol vary significantly, and using standard measures allows for uniformity. Thus, in terms of the alcohol it contains, a standard drink or unit will be the same—regardless of whether it contains beer, distilled spirits, wine, or a mix of any of these beverages.

NB: Many countries have a maximum recommended gram intake per day without defining unit size. Some countries are not listed, where the consumption of alcohol is forbidden for religious reasons for example.

For the many countries where there are no official Government guidelines, such as Belgium, China, Germany, Hungary, India or Russia for example, it is recommended that the Internationally recognised World Health Organisation low risk responsible drinking guidelines are followed. Which are:

(2) Women should not drink more than two drinks a day on average

(3) For men, not more than three drinks a day on average

(4) Try not to exceed four drinks on any one occasion

(0) Don't drink alcohol in some situations, such as when driving, if pregnant or in certain work situations and abstain from drinking at least once a week. Men or women who consistently drink more than these recommended levels may increase risks to their health.

International responsible drinking guidelines

Country	Unit/ standard drink	Recommended guidelines for adult 'low risk' consumption – maximum levels in grams of alcohol
Argentina	N/A	Some information via: www.vivamosresponsablemente.com
Australia	10g	<p>Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol (National Health and Medical Research Council Guidelines)</p> <p>For healthy men and women: Drinking no more than two standard drinks on any day reduces the lifetime risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury. Drinking no more than four standard drinks on a single occasion reduces the risk of alcohol-related injury arising from that occasion.</p> <p>For children and young people under 18 years of age, not drinking alcohol is the safest option. Parents and carers should be advised that children under 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking and that for this age group, not drinking alcohol is especially important.</p> <p>For pregnant and breastfeeding women Maternal alcohol consumption can harm the developing fetus or breastfeeding baby. For women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, not drinking is the safest option. For women who are breastfeeding, not drinking is the safest option. www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/ds10syn.htm</p>
Austria	10g	<p>Federal Ministry for Labour, Health and Social Affairs</p> <p>Men: Maximum of 24g/day. Women: maximum of 16g/day Hazardous drinking is defined as consuming 60g/day or more for men and 40g/day or more for women www.bmsg.gv.at</p>
Canada	13.6g	<p>Centre for Addiction and Mental Health</p> <p>Guideline 1 Reduce your long-term health risks by drinking no more than: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * 10 drinks a week for women, with no more than 2 drinks a day most days * 15 drinks a week for men, with no more than 3 drinks a day most days </p> <p>Plan non-drinking days every week to avoid developing a habit.</p> <p>Guideline 2 Reduce your risk of injury and harm by drinking no more than 3 drinks (for women) and 4 drinks (for men) on any single occasion. Plan to drink in a safe environment. Stay within the weekly limits outlined in Guideline 1</p> <p>Guideline 3 Do not drink when you are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * driving a vehicle or using machinery and tools * taking medicine or other drugs that interact with alcohol * doing any kind of dangerous physical activity * living with mental or physical health problems * living with alcohol dependence </p>

Country	Unit/ standard drink	Recommended guidelines for adult 'low risk' consumption – maximum levels in grams of alcohol
		<p>* pregnant or planning to be pregnant * responsible for the safety of others * making important decisions</p> <p>Guideline 4 If you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or before breastfeeding, the safest choice is to drink no alcohol at all.</p> <p>Guideline 5 If you are a child or youth, you should delay drinking until your late teens. Talk with your parents about drinking. Alcohol can harm the way your brain and body develop. If you are drinking, plan ahead, follow local alcohol laws and stay within the limits outlined in Guideline 1.</p> <p>For these guidelines, "a drink" means * 341 ml (12 oz.) bottle of 5% alcohol beer, cider or cooler * 142 ml (5 oz.) glass of 12% alcohol wine * 43 ml (1.5 oz.) serving of 40% distilled</p> <p>www.camh.net</p> <p>Éduc Alcool – 2,3,4,5 or 0 2 Women who want to drink responsibly – and for the health benefit after menopause – should have no more than TWO drinks a day. 3 Men who want to drink moderately – and for the health benefit after age 40 – should have no more than THREE drinks a day. 4 To avoid intoxication and the associated complications, women should have no more than FOUR drinks on a single occasion. 5 Men who wish to avoid intoxication and the associated complications should have no more than FIVE drinks on a single occasion. 0 A good habit: To avoid any kind of habituation or dependency, everyone – men and women – should have NO alcoholic drinks at least one day a week. For women of child-bearing age, do not drink alcohol from the time you decide to become pregnant, or if you think you might be pregnant.</p> <p>www.educalcool.qc.ca</p>
Czech Republic	N/A	<p>National Institute of Public Health Men: Maximum of 24g/day. Women: Maximum of 16g/day. www.szu.cz/. See also www.forum-psr.cz/</p>
Denmark	12g	<p>National Board of Health Men: Maximum of 21 units/week (252g). Women: Maximum of 14 units/week (168g). The National Board of Health recommends that children under the age of 15 years should not drink alcohol. www.sst.dk and www.goda.dk/</p>

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Finland	11g	Alko Inc Men: Maximum of 15 units/week (165g). Women: Maximum of 10 units/week (110g). www.alko.fi
France	10g	Based on WHO international guidelines cited by the Health Ministry Men: Maximum of 3 units/day (30g). Women: Maximum of 2 units/day (20g). visit: www.2340.fr
Germany	12g	BzGA, Federal Center for Health Education Men: Maximum of 24g/day. Women: Maximum of 16g per day. Two alcohol free days per week are recommended for both men and women. www.kenn-dein-limit.de
Greece	10g	Men: Maximum of 3 units/day Women: Maximum of 2 units/day
Hong Kong	1 unit = glass/ wine or pint/ beer	Department of Health and Social Security Men: Maximum of 3-4 units/day, maximum of 21 units/week. Women: Maximum of 2-3 units/day, maximum of 14 units/week.
Hungary	N/A	Hungarian Association for Responsible Alcohol Consumption 2: For women a maximum 2 units a day. 3: For men a maximum of 3 units per day. 4: Consume 4 units rarely, on special occasions. 0: There are times when it is inappropriate to drink e.g. when driving, when pregnant, or whilst taking some medications etc. www.alkoholtfelelosen-2340.hu
Iceland	N/A	Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Council, Public Health Institute Pregnant women are advised to abstain when pregnant or if breast feeding. www.lydheilsustod.is
Indonesia	N/A	National Dietary Guidelines state: 'Avoid drinking alcoholic beverages'. www.afic.org
Ireland	10g	Department of Health and Children Men: Maximum of 21 standard drinks/week (210g). Women: Maximum of 14 standard drinks/week (140g). For both men and women, it is important that they are spread out over the week and not saved for one session or big night out. This equates to a daily low risk limit of 2 or 3 standard drinks for women, or 3 or 4 standard drinks for men, with some alcohol free days over the course of the week. It is advised that plenty of water or non-alcoholic beverages are consumed between alcoholic drinks. www.drinkaware.ie

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Italy	12g	National Research Institute for Food and Nutrition Men: Maximum of 2-3 units/day (24-36g) Women: Maximum of 1-2 units/day (12-24g) Elderly: Maximum of 1 unit/day (12g) Children and teens should not drink at all until at least age 16. www.beviresponsabile.it
Japan	19.75g	Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare Men: 1-2 units/day (19.75g-39.5g) Women N/A
Luxembourg		Ministry of Health, The health authorities promote moderate alcohol consumption without specifying limits of daily or weekly amounts pure alcohol.
Malta	N/A	There are no government recommended guidelines. Advice from The Sense Group (TSG) , based on WHO low-risk drinking definition is: (2) Women do not drink more than two drinks a day on average (3) For men, not more than three drinks a day on average (4) Try not to exceed four drinks on any one occasion (0) Not to drink alcohol in some situations, such as when driving, if pregnant or in certain work situations and to abstain from drinking at least once a week. www.drinkawaremalta.com
Mexico		Responsible drinking advice via www.alcoholinformante.org.mex
The Netherlands	9.9g	There are no government recommended guidelines. United in the Foundation for Responsible Alcohol (STIVA) Men: Maximum of 2-3 units/day (18.8-29.7g). Women: Maximum of 1-2 units/day (9.9-18.8g) www.genietmaardrinkmetmate.nl

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New Zealand	10g	<p>Alcohol Liquor Advisory Council</p> <p>Men: Maximum of 3 unit/day (30g), a maximum of 6 units on special occasions and no more than 21 units/week (210g).</p> <p>Women no more than 2 units/day, a maximum of 4 units on special occasions and no more than 14 units/week (140g).</p> <p>Have some alcohol-free days each week.</p> <p>There are some people who should not consume alcohol, or limit their use to less than these amounts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During pregnancy - the risk of birth defects is greater if pregnant women drink, especially in the first eight to twelve weeks of pregnancy. During pregnancy, it is better not to drink any alcohol at all. • Thin people - those below average body weight (60kg for men, 50kg for women). • Young people. • Older people because their bodies are less able to handle the effects of alcohol. • People with a strong family history of alcoholism. • People who are or have been dependent on other drugs. • People who have a poor diet, or are under-nourished. <p>These guidelines may be too high when you're</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving • Operating machinery • Boating, scuba diving etc • Taking medication aspirin or any other drugs that irritate the stomach, such as steroids or anti-inflammatory drugs • Taking sleeping pills or tranquillisers, anti-depressants or narcotics; • Suffering an acute or chronic physical disease such as heart and lung disease, influenza, diabetes, epilepsy or acute infections • Recovering from an accident, injury or operation. <p>www.alcohol.org.nz</p>
Norway	N/A	<p>Directorate for Health & Social Welfare</p> <p>Visit www.alkokutt.no</p>
Poland	10g	<p>Men: 2 units/day (20g/day) up to 5 times/week (not to exceed 100g/week).</p> <p>Women: 1 unit/day (10g/day) up to 5 times/week (not to exceed 50g/week).</p> <p>Two alcohol free days per week are recommended.</p> <p>www.parpa.pl</p>
Portugal	14g	<p>National Council on Food and Nutrition</p> <p>Men: maximum of 2-3 units/day (28-42g).</p> <p>Women: Maximum of 1-2 units/day (14-28g).</p>
Romania	N/A	<p>Ministry of Health</p> <p>Men and Women: 32.5g beer/day or 20.7g wine/day.</p>
Singapore	N/A	<p>Ministry of Health National Dietary Guidelines</p> <p>Limit alcohol intake to not more than 2 standard drinks a day (about 30g alcohol).</p>

Country	Unit/ standard drink	Recommended guidelines for adult 'low risk' consumption – maximum levels in grams of alcohol
Slovenia	N/A	Institute of Public Health Men: Maximum of 20g/day, 50g on a special occasion. Women: Maximum of 10g/day, 30g on a special occasion.
South Africa	N/A	South African National Council on alcoholism and Drug dependence Men: Maximum 21 units/week. Women: Maximum 14 units/week. www.ara.co.za/
Spain	10g	Ministry of Health (National plan on drugs) Men: Maximum 40g/day. Women: Maximum 24g/day. www.alcoholysociedad.org
Sweden	N/A	Swedish Research Council Men: Maximum 20g/day. Women: Maximum 20g/day. www.vr.se
Switzerland	10-12g	Swiss Federal commission for Alcohol Problems Men and Women: Maximum of 2 units/day (20-24g).
Taiwan	N/A	Responsible drinking information via: www.tbaf.org.tw
Thailand	N/A	Ministry of Public Health National Dietary Guidelines advise 'Avoid or reduce the consumption of alcoholic beverages'
United Kingdom	8g	UK Department of Health Men: 3-4 units/day (24-32g) maximum 21 units/week (168g) Women: 2-3 units/day (16-24g) maximum 14 units week (112g). The Department of Health advises women who are pregnant or trying to become pregnant, and who choose to drink, should drink no more than 1-2 units of alcohol per week. www.drinkingandyou.com www.drinkarare.co.uk www.drinking.nhs.uk/
USA	14g	Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010 Men: an average daily consumption of up to two drinks per day, but no more than four drinks in any single day. For women: and average daily consumption of up to one drink per day for women, but no more than three drinks in any single day. The Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee's report 2010 includes these findings: Strong evidence consistently demonstrates that compared to non-drinkers, individuals who drink moderately have lower risk of coronary heart disease.... Moderate evidence suggests that compared to non-drinkers, individuals who drink moderately have a slower cognitive decline with age.... An average daily intake of one to two alcoholic beverages is associated with the lowest all-cause mortality and a low risk of diabetes and CHD among middle-aged and older adults. www.dietaryguidelines.gov