



# COPING UNDER QUARANTINE; ALCOHOL AND YOU



# INTRODUCTION TO ALCOHOL AND YOU

For some, drinking alcohol isn't really part of their day to day lives. For people that do drink in the UK, 55-65% drink at levels that are considered low risk.

There are different kinds of drinkers which you can see opposite. If you can identify with one of them or more, you can start to get a better idea into understanding your relationship with alcohol.

The following booklet will help you to learn about different types of drinking, recognise your own patterns, how to manage your habits and how to seek further help.



- Enjoys a pint or two a couple of times a week with friends in local pub or at family celebrations
- In general not really bothered about alcohol but enjoys it when consumed nonetheless



- Drinks at what health guidelines call low risk level
- The alcohol consumed wouldn't necessarily cause harm because of otherwise good health



- Has a couple of drinks but sometimes a bit more, when with friends
- Doesn't think they're drinking too much alcohol and accepts the occasional hangover
- Has a glass of beer or wine most nights at



- Needs to drink every day, feeling sick, anxious & shaky without
- Jobs & relationships have broken down
- Bottle of spirit drank most days
- Money problems arise



- Surprised that alcohol consumption is at increasing risk
- Drinking levels may cause health concerns in later life
- Regular fatigue and hangovers likely



- Drinks regularly, higher tolerance
- Arguments with loved ones are more persistent
- Hangovers have caused time off work
- Difficulty sleeping without a drink





# WHAT IS ALCOHOL?

Alcohol in itself is a colourless chemical, and can be made from almost anything that has sugar in it. Depending on what they are made from, and how they are made, different drinks contain different amounts of alcohol.

Alcohol also contains calories, with around 55 in every unit of pure alcohol. Remember though, there are also other ingredients in beside alcohol that will add to the calorie count!

Alcohol is measured by potency percentage and units. The image below gives you a rough idea on how many units are in different types and amounts of alcohol.

## One standard drink is:



Government guidelines state that there is no defined safe consumption limit for alcohol, but current recommendations are to drink no more than 14 units of alcohol a week, which is the same for both men and women. Try and spread your intake out across the week rather than drinking all your units in one go.

If you are drinking close to the limit, then consider having two or three alcohol free days a week, as this will reduce the risk to your long term health by allowing your liver time to rest.

## The following quantities contain more than one standard drink:





## WEEKLY DRINKING GUIDELINES

The Chief Medical Officer's guideline for both regular or frequent male and female adult drinkers are as follows:

- To keep health risks from alcohol to a low level it is safest not to drink more than 14 units a week on a regular basis.
- If you regularly drink as much as 14 units per week, it is best to spread your drinking evenly over three or more days. If you have one or two heavy drinking episodes a week you increase your risks of death from long term illness and from accidents and injuries.
- The risk of developing a range of health problems (including cancers of the mouth, throat and breast) increases the more you drink on a regular basis.
- If you wish to cut down the amount you drink, a good way to help achieve this is to have several drink-free days each week.



## WHAT DOES ALCOHOL DO?

Alcohol dissolves quickly into the blood stream and can therefore cause a number of negative effects in the body, such as affected judgement, slurred speech and slower reaction times.

In some cases alcohol consumption can lead to unconsciousness and death. It is important not to drive or operate machinery after drinking alcohol because it affects your judgement and co-ordination.

Your body treats alcohol like poison. It works hard to rid it from your system, but it takes a healthy liver around an hour to get rid of just one unit of alcohol. Fresh air, black coffee and cold showers won't help remove alcohol from your system, contrary to belief.





## EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL MISUSE

Consuming regular large amounts of alcohol can increase the risk of serious illnesses. These include but are not limited to:

- Inflammation of the pancreas
- Stomach ulcers
- Liver disease
- Various cancers such as mouth, throat and breast
- Brain damage
- Hearing loss

Evidence has shown that any level of alcohol consumption can expose us to the risk of developing certain cancers. Excessive alcohol drinking has also had a direct impact on mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression, as well as leading to many personal and social problems.

## WHAT KIND OF DRINKER ARE YOU?

In order to learn what kind of drinker you are, you need to consider the amount of alcohol you drink each week and also the pattern in which you are doing so. A drinking pattern is made up of when you drink or don't drink, and who you drink with.

Try and think back to the last time you had alcohol, and fill out a drinking diary that looks at where you were and who with, what type of drink you had, the date and time, how many units you consumed and how much money you spent. This will help you to begin to identify your habits and what level of risk you are at.

If you are concerned that you are a high risk and dependent drinker, you need to seek help from your GP as soon as possible before you try to lower your intake of alcohol. If you are unhappy with the amount you drink, you may find help across the rest of this booklet.



## WHY DO YOU DRINK ALCOHOL?

To benefit the most from this booklet, think about all the reasons why you drink alcohol and record them somewhere.

Some common reasons are:

- My friends do
- It helps me relax
- It helps me sleep at night
- It helps me stay calm in social situations
- It's something to do when I get bored
- I feel anxious if I go without alcohol
- I feel low in mood
- I like the feeling of being drunk
- It helps me to forget

Think about what might be good about stopping drinking alcohol or cutting down on the units you are drinking.

## BENEFITS OF REDUCING ALCOHOL INTAKE

Something that may help the idea of reducing alcohol intake is the benefits that may follow:

- More money to spend on other things
- Weight loss
- Better night's sleep
- Feeling more refreshed in the morning
- Feeling more in control
- Looking and feeling healthier and fitter
- Better relationships with friends and family
- More relaxed

Of course, there are many other benefits and we have only listed a few, but possibly the biggest benefit is reducing the risk to your long term health by lowering your alcohol consumption.





## WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?

Hopefully, you now understand about your drinking habits a lot better, and know what is to be gained by reducing or stopping your drinking if you feel it necessary.

The next step to managing your alcohol consumption is to think about what you want to do next. Do you want to continue drinking alcohol, but less of it and less frequently? Do you want to stop drinking altogether?

If you consider your drinking habits to be unhealthy, think of the consequences of continuing to drink in the way you are now. What is good and what is bad about it, and how would you see your life in six months time? Make a table that is easy to read.


Once you have done this, think about reducing or stopping drinking. What will be good and bad about that? How would you expect your life to be in six months if you reduced or stopped drinking altogether compared to if you carried on as you are now? Again, lay this out in a table.

Come to a clear and honest conclusion about yourself and your drinking. What do you want to do about it?

## CONTROL YOUR DRINKING

The way in which we consume alcohol can become in part a habit because it took time to develop.

Take time to make new habits in the way you consume and use alcohol:

- Planning: use a drinking diary to plan when you will drink and how much. Identify high risk times, pick a time to stop drinking, write down what types of alcohol you will drink and how many. Try and keep track of how much you really drink and eat before having any alcohol
  - Trimming: Reduce the amount of alcohol you actually drink by trimming back when you'll miss it least. Start drinking later in the evening, dilute spirits with a mixer, buy smaller glasses and stick to standard strength drinks.
  - Alternatives: Reduce the time you spend drinking alcohol by looking for alternatives. Pick one day a week you usually drink and do something else instead, try not to drink alcohol at home and replace it with a soft drink, offer to be the designated driver when out with friends and alternate alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic drinks.
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## PROBLEMS YOU MAY FACE

When we begin to change and adapt our habits, our bodies can respond in certain ways that can make us feel worse to begin with, known as a withdrawal period.

- If you are feeling anxious: try relaxation or yoga. Practice slow, deep breathing. Use calming thoughts, meditation and ignore anxious thoughts. Make a plan to keep your time busy and distract yourself
- If you can't sleep: exercise regularly, but not late in the evening. Make sure your sleeping environment is comfortable. Have a bedtime routine and wind down before going to bed. Your sleep will begin to improve once you reduce your alcohol intake and follow this advice
- If you're feeling bored: plan your day out so you have things to look forward to. Use money you are saving on alcohol to try a new hobby. Make time for friends and get on with jobs you are yet to finish.

- If you're feeling stressed and can't relax: relaxation and leisure time each day is really important. Plan your time and do one thing at a time, eat a balanced diet. Always talk about how you are feeling with friends and family, set priorities and don't be afraid to say no.
- If you're out with friends but feel like you're missing out: try not to focus on yourself and think of those around you. Ask about their lives, listen to what is being said. Remember, you don't need to keep up with friends who are heavy drinkers.

If you are a dependent drinker, seek help from your GP. There are numerous long term health risks associated with heavy and dependant drinking. Don't try to stop alcohol consumption by yourself without the help of your GP as the side effects can sometimes be just as damaging as drinking.

Set-backs are a normal part of life, and it can be easy to slip back into old habits. Just re-read this booklet and keep an alcohol diary to make sure you stay on track!



We hope this resource has helped you, if you need any further resources around mental and physical wellbeing, please visit our

### Business continuity and keeping your employees engaged through Covid-19

page on our website, you will find everything we offer our clients employee's there, for free during this time. We hope you get some comfort and value from these.

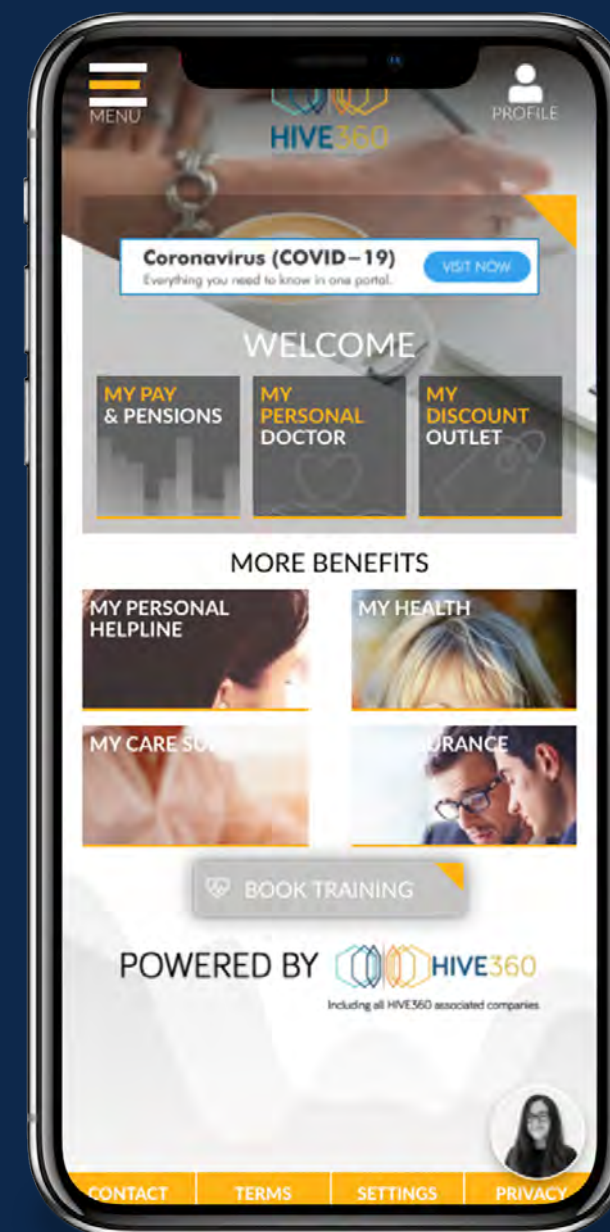
Stay safe, stay healthy, stay at home.

## WHO ARE HIVE360?

Hive360 empowers businesses of all sizes to achieve better engagement with their people.

We believe that everyone deserves the best work-life experience and that great communication, wellbeing support and financial benefits are the cornerstones of this.

Our game-changing engagement platform delivers better communication, vital healthcare support and attractive lifestyle benefits in the palm of your hand.





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