

Choices and Decisions: **ALCOHOL**



Taking Your Liver into Adulthood is aimed at young people aged 11+.



Caring for young lives
Children's Liver Disease Foundation

Growing up can be a difficult time for everybody. If you have a liver condition or have had a transplant there are some extra things you may need to think about.

This leaflet is written for young people who have a liver condition or have had a transplant. It aims to give you information about the health choices and decisions related to alcohol and your liver.

There are other leaflets in this series. Contact CLDF's young persons officer to get your copy or download from CLDF's young persons website. Details are given later in this leaflet.

There is a lot of general information available about alcohol and health, this is not included in this leaflet. Details about where you can find this information and extra help are given at the end.

You and your family may have your own views and values about the things covered in this leaflet. You may have talked about them already. After reading this leaflet you may want to talk again.



For many people drinking alcohol is part of socialising. Many people like to have an alcoholic drink when out with friends or at a party and, in moderation, it's not usually harmful.

If you have a liver condition or have had a transplant, specific advice beyond the general information can't be given here.

To get the best advice for you — talk to your hospital team.

In a recent paper, the Chief Medical Officer advises that:

- Being alcohol free until you are 18 is the healthiest option
- If you decide to drink it should not be until you are at least 15
- After you're 15, you should know that not drinking is the healthiest option and you should never drink any more than 2–3 units if you are female and 3–4 units if you are male on any single day; and
- If you are 15–17, you should not drink every week, and never on more than one day a week

THE LAW AND ALCOHOL:

Aged under 5

It is illegal to give an alcoholic drink to a child under five (except under medical supervision in an emergency).

Aged under 16

You can go into a pub when there is a children's certificate on display if you are under 16 as long as you are supervised by an adult to have a meal, but you can't drink alcohol. However, some premises may have licensing conditions stopping you from entering, such as pubs which have experienced problems with underage drinking.

16 or 17 years old

In Scotland, if you are over the age of 16, you can buy beer, wine or cider with a meal as long as it is served with a meal. In England and Wales the same law applies, except the alcohol must be bought by someone 18 or over and they must be with you at the time.

Aged under 18

It's against the law for anyone under 18 to buy alcohol or for someone over 18 to buy it for you, unless you're having a meal, then the same law applies as for a 16–17 year old, as above. In Northern Ireland you are allowed into a pub that serves food, but you are not allowed to drink any alcohol even if an adult has bought it for you.

Some towns and cities have local bye-laws banning the drinking of alcohol in public places.

NATIONAL ADULT GUIDELINES SENSIBLE DRINKING LIMITS

Recommended allowances are:

Women

Should not regularly drink more than 2 to 3 units of alcohol in a single day (no more than 14 units in a week)

Men

Should drink no more than 3–4 units of alcohol in a single day (no more than 21 units in a week).

You should avoid alcohol for a minimum of two days a week to give your liver a break.

HOW DO YOU WORK OUT HOW MANY UNITS OF ALCOHOL ARE IN A DRINK?

An accurate way of calculating how many units you are drinking is to multiply the alcohol by volume percentage (abv) figure by the size of your drink in millimeters (ml) and divide by 1,000.

For example, a typical bottle of beer is 330ml, at 5% abv strength.

Therefore: $330 \times 5 = 1,650$;

Divide this by 1,000 = 1.65 units.

As you are probably already aware, alcohol can cause liver damage to anyone whether they have an underlying liver disease or not. **If you have a liver disease then you already have some degree of liver damage which means that your liver has less reserve to cope with processing any alcohol that you drink.** In an ideal world, anyone with a liver disease wouldn't drink alcohol because of the difficulty that their already damaged liver would have in trying to get rid of it from their body and because of the cumulative detrimental effect that it could have in causing further liver damage.

Everyone drinks at different rates, so do not feel pressured to try and keep up with your friends or even have an alcoholic drink if you have been advised not to, or do not want to.

WITH A LIVER CONDITION THERE MAY BE ADDED RISKS:

- The general advice for young people may not apply to you and your particular liver condition. You should talk to your hospital team to get the best advice for you.

- Alcohol may significantly change the effects of the medicines you may be taking. Read the instruction leaflet which comes with your medicines and talk it through with your hospital team.
- Binge drinking may be more damaging to your liver.
- Alcohol may take longer to break down in your liver.

You may find it helpful to talk to someone about this, e.g. your hospital team, a teacher, youth worker, local doctor (GP) or practice nurse, or someone in your family.



YOU MIGHT WANT TO THINK ABOUT:

- Drinking slower than everyone else, so you don't drink as much
- Swapping between alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks

If you need help dealing with this issue, or would like to talk through some ideas, then your hospital team or CLDF's young persons officer would be happy to help.

YOU MIGHT WANT TO THINK ABOUT:

- Drinking too much alcohol could result in you getting a hangover that could make you feel ill for a couple of days.
- Alcohol poisoning can make you seriously ill.
- Mixing alcohol with other drugs is dangerous as the effects are unpredictable.
- Regular drinking can cause you to put on weight. A bottle of strong lager has the same amount of calories as a chocolate bar.
- Being embarrassed the next day about your behaviour because you can't remember what you did.
- Accidents are more likely, like falling over, or not being aware of traffic, driving whilst being over the legal limit or being in the car with a driver who is over the legal limit is dangerous, and against the law. You, your friends or an innocent person could get seriously injured or killed.
- Not thinking clearly — you may make decisions you later regret. Confusion and lack of inhibitions could lead to unplanned and unprotected sex, unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. You are also more at risk of assault and rape.

SOME HELPFUL WEBSITES AND ORGANISATIONS

www.wouldyou.direct.gov.uk/flash.php

A government website on alcohol with real life stories and information on how to stay safe.

www.talkaboutalcohol.com

A fun website, packed with information on alcohol, interesting things to explore and challenges to try.

www.drinkaware.co.uk

A website of facts and tips on alcohol and drinking.

www.downyourdrink.org.uk

A website that helps young people to work out if they're drinking too much, and if so, what they can do about it.



WANT TO GET INVOLVED AND HELP OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE?



What about a fundraising event?

Contact CLDF's young persons officer to talk about ideas. Or if you want to make a donation, go to www.cldf-focus.org

Search 'CLDF' to find us on Facebook

TOP TIP

When you're out, to prevent your drink from being "spiked" with an illegal drug — drink from a bottle and keep the top covered with your thumb or use a spikey, (a plastic stopper that helps prevent drinks from being spiked).

Don't leave your drink and return to it later, and don't accept drinks from strangers.



Young People and CLDF FORUM

Welcome, **Guest**. Please log in or register.

Subject:	Started by:
I want someone to talk to that knows what I'm going through	Charlie
I'd like to meet other young people with liver conditions online	Abbie
I want someone to talk to that knows what I'm going through	Lucy
It'd look great on my CV if I could get involved in CLDF's young person review	Abdulina
I've so many questions but don't know where to get answers	Demetrois
I'd like to be in my local paper to raise awareness of childhood liver diseases	Bethan
I feel like the only person in the world with my liver condition	Harry
I've learnt to live with my liver disease, I want to help others	Megan
My brother has a liver disease and I want to know more	Kieran

Pages: [1] [Go Up](#)

[Our forum](#) > [Children's Liver Disease Support Group](#) > [Forum Announcements](#)

These are just a few reasons why you may get in touch with CLDF's young persons officer or it may be that you just want to say hi.

CLDF's young persons website - www.cldf-focus.org

Search '**CLDF**' to find us on Facebook

Email: ypsupport@childliverdisease.org

or call/text **0121 212 6009**

Children's Liver Disease Foundation

- **Providing** a young person's programme
- **Giving** the opportunity to meet others living with liver disease
- **Responding** immediately to a family's first needs
- **Helping** families to adjust to life with liver disease
- **Training** healthcare professionals
- **Running** a wide-ranging research programme

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