



10 MINUTES TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE Call time on alcohol



**FIGHT
FOR EVERY
HEARTBEAT**
bhf.org.uk

Over time, drinking too much alcohol can put you at risk of heart attack, stroke, and heart failure. The good news is there are some simple things you can do to lower your risk.

You're in control. By taking a few minutes to make some small changes to your lifestyle, you could lower your risk of heart disease – and change your life.

Why am I at risk?

Your heart and brain need **oxygen** from your blood to work properly. If the tubes that supply your heart muscle or brain with blood (your **arteries**) get clogged up or blocked with fatty material, little or no oxygen can get to them.

If this happens to part of your heart muscle, you'll have a **heart attack**. If this happens to your brain, you'll have a **stroke**.

What does alcohol have to do with it?

- Drinking too much can cause **high blood pressure**. Over time this extra pressure on the walls of your arteries can damage them and means they are more likely to get clogged up – putting you at risk of a heart attack or stroke.
- Drinking a lot (more than 15 units) in one go can affect how your heart beats (your **heart rhythm**) which could increase your risk of stroke or sudden death.
- Over time, regular heavy drinking can weaken your heart, meaning it can't pump as well as it should. This can lead to **heart failure**.

How much is too much?

To stay healthy:

- don't drink more than 14 units of alcohol each week
- have several alcohol-free days each week, and
- if you're going to drink up to 14 units in a week, spread them out over at least three days, don't drink them all at once.

Aim to keep to these guidelines even if you only drink occasionally.

A little more alcohol on some days might not cause a healthy adult too much harm in the short term. But regularly drinking more than this can lead to health problems over time.

What is a unit?

Units are a way of counting how much alcohol you are drinking. The number of units in a drink is based on the size of the drink and how strong it is.



What does a unit look like?

The number of units in a drink is worked out using the size and strength (ABV) of the drink.

ABV stands for alcohol by volume and means the amount of pure alcohol in a drink.

The higher the ABV, the stronger the drink is – so a pint of beer with a strength of 3.6% ABV has 2 units, but a pint of higher-strength beer at 5.2% ABV has 3 units.

1 unit

Fortified wine, sherry, port (50ml 20%ABV)



1 unit

1 single shot of spirits (25ml 40%ABV)



1.4 units

Alcopop (275ml 5%ABV)



1.5 units

Small glass of wine (125ml 12%ABV)



1.6 units

Bottle of lager / beer or cider (330ml 5%ABV)



2.1 units

Regular glass of wine (175ml 12%ABV)



2.2 units

Pint of regular strength lager (568ml 3.8%ABV)



3 units

Large glass of wine (250ml 12%ABV)



3.4 units

Pint of strong lager / beer or cider (568ml 6%ABV)



This information is a guide – the exact amount of units in a drink will vary according to size and strength.

Time to cut down?

Cutting down on how many units you're drinking can help you avoid health problems in the future.

What can I do?

- Check how many units are in your drinks – use this booklet or look at the back of the bottle, can or container.
- Have a non-alcoholic drink in between your alcoholic drinks to space out your units.
- Choose drinks that are lower in alcohol. For example, a pint of strong beer has the same amount of alcohol units as three gin and tonics.

As well as keeping an eye on the weekly guidelines, it's important to avoid 'binge' drinking. Drinking a lot (more than 15 units) in one go can affect your heart beat.



Time for more help?

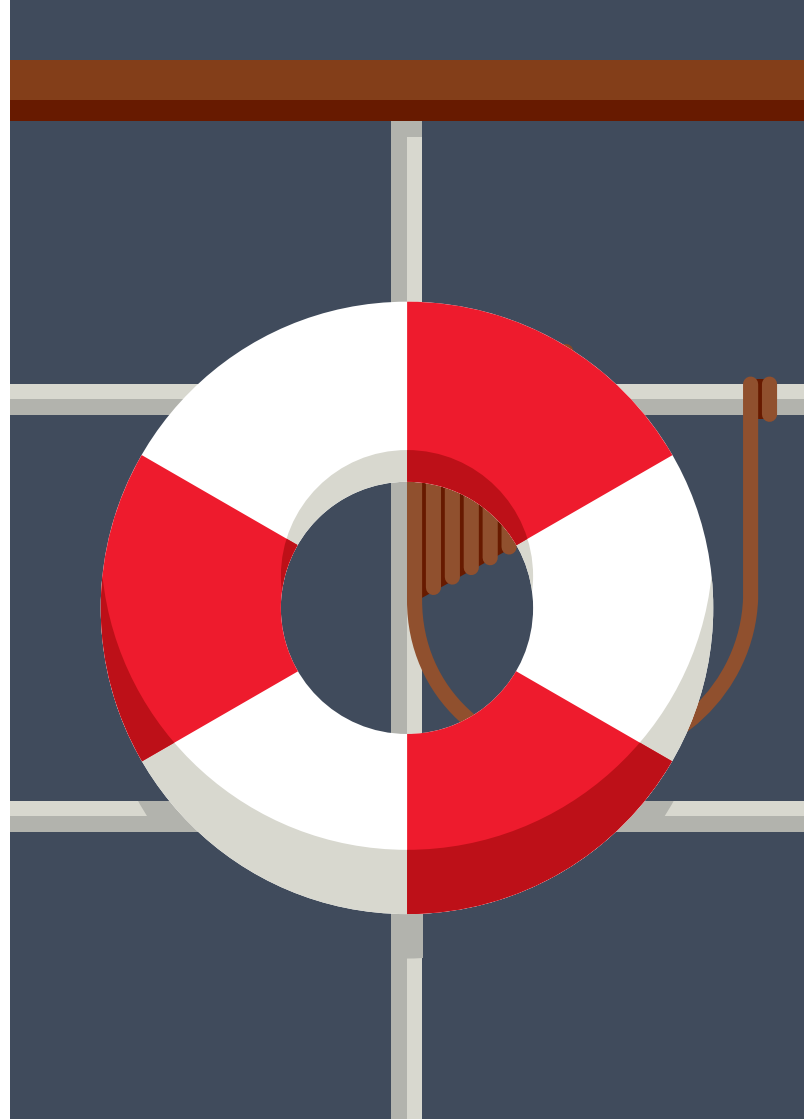
Alcohol can affect your mood and how you feel. You can become **dependent** on alcohol, which means that your body or mind learn to depend on it to make you feel better.

A lot of people who are dependent on alcohol manage to go about their daily life ok and seem fine. But because it can damage your mental and general health, it's important to ask for help.

You should ask for help if you:

- feel you can't stop drinking once you start
- need alcohol to do normal daily tasks
- think a lot about when you can have your next drink
- drink more often, faster and more than people around you
- need to drink a lot to feel the effects of alcohol
- find people close to you are worried about your drinking.

Your doctor may be able to help or they may arrange for you to see another health professional.



Matt's story

"I started drinking at 15. I was drinking every day, but not because I needed to, because I liked to. Then I lost my job, and drinking turned into a habit. I was using it to go out shopping, do the school run. I was alcohol dependent. Over the next six years I lost everything – family, friends, my partner and my health. I was on the streets with nowhere to go. I hit rock bottom.

I sought treatment and spent my thirtieth birthday in detox. After that, I knew that was it.

I started volunteering, then gained employment as an alcohol recovery worker. We see a lot of people with high blood pressure and heart problems. They're in denial about what alcohol does to their health. They don't start addressing their problems until they lose everything.

Now my life is completely different. I'm healthier and I feel better in myself. My aims right now are my family and my work. I don't ever look back."

Find out more at [bhf.org.uk/ten](https://www.bhf.org.uk/ten)



Find out more

To find out more go to **bhf.org.uk/ten** or ring the BHF Heart Helpline on 0300 330 3311.

Lines are open 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday at a similar cost to 01 or 02 numbers.

Your doctor or nurse should be able to give you more information about alcohol and how to cut down.

Join us in the fight for every heartbeat

For 50 years the British Heart Foundation has been funding life-saving heart research.

From babies with heart problems to the mums, dads and grandparents who survive a heart attack, so many people need our help.

But we need your support to continue the fight against heart disease. Visit **bhf.org.uk** to make a donation or find out more.

The British Heart Foundation would like to thank South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust for their support in the development of this booklet.



Coronary heart disease is the UK's single biggest killer.

For over 50 years we've pioneered research that's transformed the lives of people living with heart and circulatory conditions. Our work has been central to the discoveries of vital treatments that are changing the fight against heart disease.

But so many people still need our help.

From babies born with life-threatening heart problems to the many Mums, Dads and Grandparents who survive a heart attack and endure the daily battles of heart failure.

Join our fight for every heartbeat in the UK. Every pound raised, minute of your time and donation to our shops will help make a difference to people's lives.

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British Heart
Foundation

**10 MINUTES TO
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Your challenge



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Call time on alcohol

Your 10 minute challenge

Take a few minutes every day for a week to write down the alcoholic drinks you've had.

You're in control. By taking the time to make small changes to your lifestyle, you can help keep your heart healthy, and change your life.

Day	What did you drink?	How much did you drink?	How many units? (see your booklet)
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			

At the end of the week, look back over what you did and answer these questions:

Did you drink more than 14 units over the week?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Did you have any alcohol free days in the week?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you need to cut down on your drinking to keep inside the recommended weekly amount?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Set yourself a goal to help you cut down on how much you drink. Put a number to it and set a date to complete it by:

Example: *I will not have more than three glasses of wine a week for one month.*

Target date: / /