



ALCOHOL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Information, Guidance and Advice.
Helping build a healthier lifestyle.

ALCOHOL
and you

IS IT TIME
FOR A
CHANGE?

How do you use alcohol?

Mental health problems and drinking alcohol often go together. For some people going through a tough time, drinking can be a way to cope. It can work in the short term but...it is only temporary.

Alcohol is a depressant drug that can change the way you think and reduces your ability to deal with difficulties. Alcohol can lower your mood or increase anxiety.

If you are given this booklet by a mental health professional you can use it in several ways:

- Use it to see if your drinking is having a negative effect on your mental health
- Find out how much you know or don't know about alcohol
- Ask yourself, is now a good time to change the way you drink?
- Discover how you can get support to make changes

Whatever you decide to do about alcohol and how you use this material is **entirely up to you**. We hope you will find it helpful.

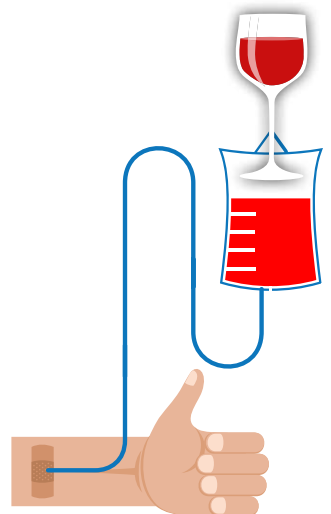
Alcohol and medication

Mixing alcohol and medicines can be harmful. Some medications including painkillers contain more than one ingredient that can react with alcohol. Alcohol can intensify feelings of being sleepy, drowsy or lightheaded.

Alcohol also can interfere with some medications used to treat mental health problems.

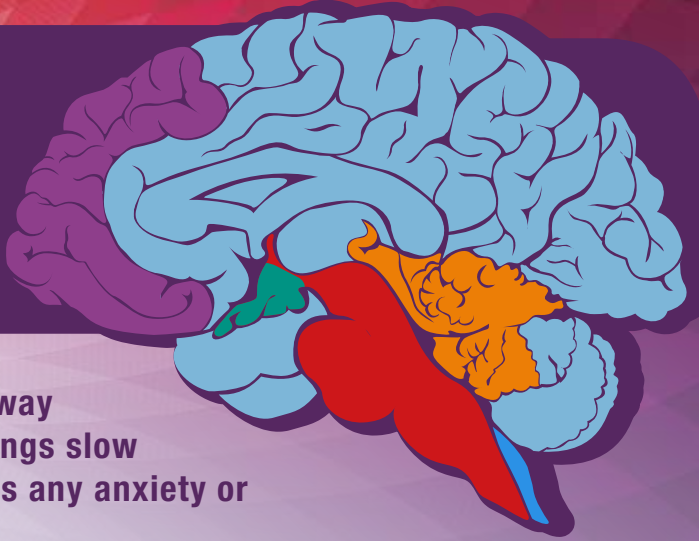
Are you taking any other medication?

How much do you know about your brain, mood and alcohol?



What parts of the brain does alcohol affect?

The brain is an amazing but complicated organ. Alcohol affects parts of the brain which can negatively affect your mental health.



Alcohol affects the way the brain works. Things slow down. Alcohol makes any anxiety or depression worse.

Different parts of your brain controls your:

THINKING & MEMORY.

Alcohol relaxes this area making you feel less inhibited, slows down the processing of information and affects the ability to think clearly and make rational decisions.

LIFE SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

Alcohol induces sleepiness, lowers body temperature and slows down your breathing.

MOTIVATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

The pituitary gland regulates your hormones. Alcohol affects this along with your hunger, thirst, sexual behaviour, pleasure and ability to deal with stress.

MOVEMENT & BALANCE

Alcohol controls your movement and balance resulting in staggering and being off-balance when you drink too much.

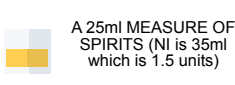
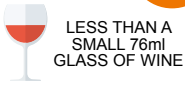
Could drinking be affecting your mental health?



Remember any decrease helps!

Do you know how much is too much?

This is **1** unit of alcohol...



THERE IS NO COMPLETELY SAFE LIMIT OF DRINKING

This means you **should not** drink more than 14 units per week.

For Male & Female

you shouldn't drink more than

14 units per week

+ minimum of 2 ALCOHOL FREE days a week.

Know your weekly limit in units and measures



6X 175ml
GLASSES OF 13% ABV WINE



6X 568ml
PINTS OF 4% ABV BEER



5X 568ml
PINTS OF 4.5% ABV CIDER



10X 35ml
MEASURES OF 40% ABV SPIRITS

Do you ever experience any of the following negative effects from alcohol?

BEHAVIOUR

- AGGRESSION
- MAKING BAD DECISIONS
- ACCIDENTS
- DEPRESSION
- BLACKOUTS
- MEMORY LOSS
- ANXIETY

HEALTH

- HEART RACING
- ULCERS
- HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE
- TREMBLING HANDS
- LIVER PROBLEMS

SOCIAL

- ARGUMENTS
- BAD RELATIONSHIPS
- WORK/SCHOOL PROBLEMS
- REGRETS OF THINGS YOU HAVE DONE

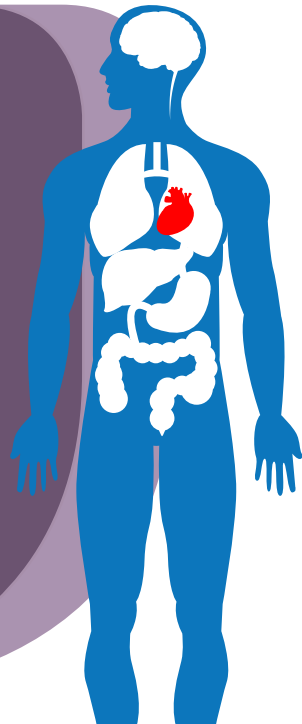
WHAT WORRIES YOU MOST? (PLEASE TICK)

SOCIAL

- Arguments
- Strained relationships
- Work/school problems
- Regrets of things you have done
- Aggression

MENTAL HEALTH

- Depression
- Low mood
- Memory loss
- Anxiety
- Making unwise decisions



So what is my next step?

Get feedback about your drinking may be a start. Have a look at our website at www.alcoholandyouni.com

Several other things people find helpful:

- Keep an eye on your drinking through a drinks diary
- Think through the reasons you want to change.
- Make a firm committed decision to change.
- Make a plan: how are you going to do it
- Prepare for difficult situations
- Get support

So what do you want to do?

- Change nothing / I don't have a problem
- Drink less / Avoid problems
- Stop drinking / Alcohol is not worth the hassle



How much are you drinking on an average week?

INSERT YOUR UNITS BELOW AND TOTAL UP

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | TOTAL |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |

Is alcohol affecting your mental health?

| YES | NO |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Was your mood affected on any of those days?

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|

On a scale of 1 (not important) to 10 (extremely important) please circle
How important is it for you to improve your mental health?

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|

Where can I get support?

There are a wide range of early intervention, treatment and support services in place throughout Northern Ireland.



Visit Drugs and Alcohol NI www.drugsandalcoholni.info and click on the 'Services Near You' section you will find a range of search options to help you find the most appropriate source of support closest to you. It is also worth noting that a number of services can offer advice and one-to-one support to family members regardless of whether the person they care about is ready to get help or not – these services are also featured on the website.



Another useful website is

**ALCOHOL
and you**

www.alcoholandyouni.com

which features a range of online information on alcohol as well as a number of alcohol tools within their 'Resources' section. It's main feature is the online alcohol self help course that can let you help yourself at your own pace with a drinks diary, unit checker and more.

You can of course also speak to your GP, or any other healthcare professional, who will be able to offer you information and advice and who may also signpost or refer you on to relevant services for more intensive support.

In Crisis?

Lifeline

24/7 CRISIS RESPONSE HELPLINE
0808 808 8000



Project supported by the PHA



"Addressing drugs and alcohol together"



"Working together to reduce alcohol related harm"

Resource originally developed by the 'Alcohol and You' partnership comprised of ASCERT, Addiction NI and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust with funding from the Big Lottery. This version has been produced for distribution and use throughout the region with funding from the Public Health Agency. © March, 2017