

### > What is harmful drinking?

Harmful drinking is defined as a pattern of alcohol consumption causing health problems directly related to alcohol. This includes psychological problems such as depression, alcohol-related accidents or conditions such as acute pancreatitis.

### > What are the risks of heavy drinking?

Long term heavy drinking can increase your risk of developing:

- High blood pressure - a major risk factor of having a stroke or heart attack
- Heart disease
- Liver disease
- Liver cancer and bowel cancer
- Mouth cancer
- Cirrhosis of liver (where damage to the liver causes scar tissues to build up which can lead to cancer)

### > Other effects of alcohol

- **Alcohol has high sugar content;** drinking excessive amounts over time can decrease the effectiveness of insulin, leading to high blood sugar levels and diabetes.
- **Alcohol is a diuretic;** it acts on the kidneys to make you lose more fluids from your body, leading to dehydration which can cause headaches.
- **Alcohol poisoning** may lead to vomiting, seizures (fits) and falling unconscious.

### > What about treatment?

- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) has been shown to be helpful
- Medication such as acamprosate, disulfiram, naltrexone and nalmefene can be prescribed to treat alcohol misuse
- Keeping a drinking diary to record how many units of alcohol you drink a week may help control your alcohol intake

## Alcohol Units

1 unit is:

½ pint beer, lager, cider ABV 3.6%  
125ml glass of wine  
25ml measure of spirits  
100ml glass of prosecco

### Alcohol Guidelines

- Men and women should not regularly drink more than 14 units a week
- If you drink more than 14 units of alcohol a week, it's best to spread this evenly over three days or more
- Pregnant women should not drink alcohol
- Have one or two alcohol free days each week
- If you have drunk too much, allow 48 hours for your body to recover

### Do you know that?

- Alcohol is very high in calories and excessive consumption can lead to weight gain
- Alcohol can affect your sleep patterns and it best to avoid drinking alcohol before bedtime
- Alcohol weakens the heart muscle, which can mean the heart does not pump blood efficiently, this can cause premature death, usually through heart failure

**References:** NHS choices: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/high-blood-pressure-hypertension/>  
Public Health England: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-combating-high-blood-pressure/health-matters-combating-high-blood-pressure>

*Last reviewed January 2024*

To contact Bromley Well call the Single Point of Access on **0808 278 7898** or direct Lifestyle Support lines **07985 431484 / 07985 444210** Email [enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk) [www.bromleywell.org.uk](http://www.bromleywell.org.uk)



[@BromleyWellService](https://www.facebook.com/BromleyWellService)



[@BromleyWell](https://twitter.com/BromleyWell)

## &gt; Further resources

<b>Drinkaware</b> <a href="http://www.drinkaware.co.uk">www.drinkaware.co.uk</a>  <b>Drinkline 0300 123 1110</b>	National charity providing advice, information and tools to help you make better choices about your drinking.
<b>Alcohol Change UK</b> <a href="http://Alcohol Change UK">Alcohol Change UK</a>  <b>Alcoholics Anonymous 0800 9177 650</b>	National charity providing information, advice and support to help you make better choices about your drinking.
<a href="#">Drink Wise Age Well</a>	National charity offering information and support to make healthier choices about alcohol as you age.
<b>Drugs and alcohol in Bromley</b> <b>0208 289 1999</b>  <a href="#">Bromley Drug and Alcohol Services</a>  <a href="#">NHS Live Well Alcohol Support</a>	BDAS, local support.  Link to further information about support within the borough.  Information on the risks of drinking too much alcohol and tips on cutting down and drinking sensibly.
<a href="#">NHS Better Health &amp; Drink Less App</a>	Includes Drinks Tracker App. An easy-to-use drinks tracker to help you stay in control of how much alcohol you drink.

To contact Bromley Well call the Single Point of Access on **0808 278 7898** or direct Lifestyle Support lines **07985 431484 / 07985 444210** Email [enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk) [www.bromleywell.org.uk](http://www.bromleywell.org.uk)



[@BromleyWellService](#)



[@BromleyWell](#)