

> 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 (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** - this 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>

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To contact Bromley Well call the Single Point of Access on **0808 278 7898** or Lifestyle Support on **07985 444210 / 07985 433045** Email enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk www.bromleywell.org.uk



> Further resources

<p>Drinkaware www.drinkaware.co.uk</p> <p>Drinkline 0300 123 1110</p>	<p>National charity providing advice, information and tools to help you make better choices about your drinking.</p>
<p>Alcohol Concern www.alcoholconcern.org.uk</p> <p>Helpline 0800 9177 650</p>	<p>National charity providing information, advice and support to help you make better choices about your drinking.</p>
<p>Drink Wise Age Well</p>	<p>National charity offering information and support to make healthier choices about alcohol as you age.</p>
<p>Drugs and alcohol in Bromley 0208 289 1999</p> <p>Bromley Drug and Alcohol Services</p>	<p>BDAS, local support.</p> <p>Link to further information about support within the borough.</p>
<p>NHS Live Well Alcohol Support</p>	<p>Information on the risks of drinking too much alcohol and tips on cutting down and drinking sensibly.</p>
<p>NHS Approved Apps</p>	<p>Includes Drinks Tracker App. An easy-to-use drinks tracker to help you stay in control of how much alcohol you drink.</p>