

Low-risk drinking reduces your risk of alcohol-related health issues. But did you know that only 2% of Irish adults know the HSE low-risk weekly alcohol guidelines? This means that most of us don't have a clear understanding of what alcohol misuse is.

THE LOW-RISK GUIDELINES FOR ADULTS ARE:

Women: Less than 11 standard drinks (110g pure alcohol) spread out over the week, with at least two alcohol-free days

Men: Less than 17 standard drinks (170g pure alcohol) spread out over the week, with at least two alcohol-free days

There is no safe level of alcohol consumption overall. Regular binge drinking or drinking more than the low-risk guidelines will increase risks to your health, wellbeing and safety. Risks include cancer, stomach disease, accidents, high blood pressure and depression.

CAN I SAVE THESE TO DRINK IN ONE SITTING?

It is best to space any drinking out over the week. This gives your body a break and time to recover. Having at least two alcohol-free days in the week (more is even better) is good for your physical and mental health. This can also help to break the cycle of a habit that may be forming. Remember, these are guidelines – not a target. The less you drink, the lower your risk of developing alcohol-related health issues.

WHAT IS BINGE DRINKING?

Binge drinking (or heavy episodic drinking) is consuming six or more standard drinks in one sitting, usually in a short space of time. This is the equivalent of three pints of cider (568ml), six bottles of lager (330ml) or four glasses of prosecco (150ml). The term 'binge drinking' is not a colloquialism, it is a clinical definition used by the HSE and the World Health Organisation.

Our liver can process one standard drink per hour. When you binge, you're drinking faster than your liver can handle. This means that the liver's ability to process alcohol AND complete all the other essential functions it performs is affected.

In Ireland, binge drinking is widely considered to be the norm – 74% of Irish adults believe that excessive drinking is 'just a part of Irish culture'. It is more common among men than women, and the under-25s. That said, binge drinking is still evident across all age groups.

WHAT IS HAZARDOUS DRINKING?

Hazardous drinking is defined as when a person drinks over the recommended low-risk weekly guidelines. It is also possible to drink dangerously by binge drinking (six or more standard drinks in one sitting), even if the guidelines are adhered to. Health problems directly related to alcohol may not have been experienced yet, but there is an increasing risk of experiencing problems in the future.

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