Healthy Living

Limit Alcohol

If you choose to drink, limit yourself to one drink per day if you are female. Limit yourself to two drinks per day if you are male. Avoid drinking too much alcohol at one time (binge drinking). If you are concerned about your drinking, talk with your VA health care team about getting help.

What are the health risks associated with drinking?

- For many adults, drinking small amounts of alcohol does not cause health problems.
- If you drink too much alcohol, or if you binge drink, you are at a higher risk of health problems, such as liver damage or other injuries.

What is one drink?

- 12 oz. regular beer OR
- 8–9 oz. malt liquor OR
- 5 oz. table wine OR
- 1.5 oz. 80-proof hard liquor

How do I know if I am binge drinking?

- You are binge drinking:
  - if you are female and you drink more than three drinks on one occasion.
  - if you are male and you drink more than four drinks on one occasion.
  - if you are over 65 and you drink more than three drinks on one occasion.

How much is too much?

- If you are female, on average, you should not drink more than one drink per day (seven drinks per week).
- If you are male, you should not drink more than two drinks per day (14 drinks per week).

A Better Way to LIVE

Talk with your health care team about your goals.

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Who should not drink alcohol?

- Children and teenagers.
- People who plan to drive, operate machines, or take part in other activities that require attention, skill, or coordination.
- People of any age who cannot limit their drinking to the recommended levels.
- Women who are pregnant or who plan to become pregnant.
- People who take certain medications that interact with alcohol.
- People with certain medical conditions.
- People who are recovering from alcohol dependence (alcoholism).

Can alcohol dependence be treated?

- If you are dependent on alcohol, effective treatment is available.
- Effective treatments include individual counseling, group treatments, medications to reduce craving or prevent relapse, and inpatient or residential treatment.
- Remember, you can always talk with your VA health care team about the resources VA has available that can help you.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- VHA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention: www.prevention.va.gov
- Rethinking Drinking*: Alcohol and your Health: http://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/IsYourDrinkingPatternRisky/WhatsYourPattern.asp
- Alcohol*: A Women's Health Issue: http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochurewomen/women.htm
- Safe Driving Initiative Brochure: http://www.safedriving.va.gov/docs/safe_driving_brochure.pdf
- Healthfinder* — Drink Alcohol Only in Moderation: http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx?topicId=16

* Indicates that the link leads to a non-VA website. The VA is not responsible for content on the site.

If you have questions about how to make healthy living changes, please talk with your health care team.

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