

IS YOUR
DRINKING



NYC[™]
Health

Most New Yorkers who drink do so without negative consequences. But about three out of ten report risky or excessive drinking.

It's important to know how much you are drinking. Here are a few examples of standard drinks.

12 fl oz of regular beer



about 5% alcohol content

=

8 to 9 fl oz of malt liquor
(shown in a 12 oz glass)



about 7% alcohol content

=

5 fl oz of table wine



about 12% alcohol content

=

1.5 fl oz shot of distilled spirits
(gin, rum, tequila, vodka, whiskey, etc.)



about 40% alcohol content

Do you know how much you are drinking?

- ▶ 1 bottle of wine = 5 drinks.
- ▶ 1 pint of beer = $1\frac{1}{3}$ drinks, so 3 pints = 4 drinks.
- ▶ A "fifth" (750 ml) of spirits = 17 drinks.
- ▶ Many mixed drinks, such as martinis and cosmopolitans, contain two or three standard drinks.

What is low-risk drinking?

Stay within these low-risk drinking limits to protect your health.



Source: NIAAA at <https://www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/>

What is risky drinking?

The more drinks you have in one day and the more heavy drinking days you have, the greater your risk.

Risky or excessive drinking increases your risk for:

- ▶ Accidents and injuries
- ▶ Committing or being the victim of acts of violence
- ▶ Suicide
- ▶ Cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, breast and colon
- ▶ Hypertension
- ▶ Depression, dementia and other mental health disorders

How can you reduce your risk?

Even small changes can reduce your risk of developing alcohol-related problems.

Different strategies work for different people. Here are some to try.

- ▶ Stay within the low-risk drinking limits.
- ▶ Take note of how much you drink, and when and where you drink more.
- ▶ Set a goal for how many drinks you will have and write it down before you drink.
- ▶ Space your drinks over time and drink non-alcoholic drinks, such as seltzer or water, in between.
- ▶ Eat food while you are drinking.
- ▶ Get support from friends and/or professionals.
- ▶ Get involved in non-drinking activities.
- ▶ Avoid people and settings that trigger the urge to drink.

For some people, any drinking may pose health risks, including the following:

- ▶ People who are under 21
- ▶ People who are pregnant
- ▶ People who have hepatitis or other liver diseases
- ▶ People who have an alcohol use disorder

Why is underage drinking risky?

Underage drinking increases the risk of developing alcohol use disorders. Nearly half of people who start drinking before age 14 will become alcohol dependent in their lifetimes.

Underage drinking is associated with risky behaviors like unsafe sexual activity, drinking and driving, and experiencing or engaging in violent behavior.

Each year, alcohol-related injuries cause 5,000 deaths among people under age 21 in the United States.

In 2011, there were nearly 7,000 alcohol-related emergency department visits among New Yorkers under age 21.

If you are concerned about a friend or family member, visit samhsa.gov and search **underage drinking prevention** for tips and resources.

Why is drinking while pregnant risky?

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs) are the leading preventable cause of intellectual disabilities and birth defects. One in 100 babies is born with an FASD. Undiagnosed, misdiagnosed and untreated FASDs can lead to more severe learning, behavioral, mental health and substance use problems.

Although not every alcohol-exposed pregnancy results in a child with an FASD, it is safest to not drink while pregnant.

Why is drinking with hepatitis or liver disease risky?

Drinking alcohol when you have hepatitis increases your risk of developing fibrosis, liver disease and liver cancer.

It's safest not to drink at all. But any reduction can still help protect your liver.

What is alcohol use disorder?

On the spectrum of risky drinking, alcohol use disorder is the most severe. Signs include:

- ▶ A strong, irresistible urge to drink
- ▶ Being unable to stop drinking once you start
- ▶ Blackouts
- ▶ The need to drink greater amounts of alcohol to feel its effects
- ▶ Withdrawal symptoms, including nausea, sweating, tremors and anxiety, when the effects of the alcohol wear off.

Alcohol use disorder can be treated with medication, counseling and help groups.

How does risky drinking affect everyone?

Risky drinking can be costly: it leads to lost productivity, increased health care, sanitation, and law enforcement costs. It is also a major contributor to violence. One in five New Yorkers reported experiencing harm in the past six months due to someone else's drinking, and nearly half of those who experienced harm were non-drinkers. Stay within the low-risk limits to protect yourself and your community.

Is your drinking putting you at risk?

Write in your score for each question and add up the total below.

Over the past 12 months:	0	1	2	3	4	Score
How often have you had a drink that contained alcohol?	Never	Once a month or less	2 to 4 times a month	2 to 3 times a week	4 or more times a week	
On a typical drinking day, how many drinks did you have?	1 or 2	3 or 4	5 or 6	7 to 9	10 or more	
How often did you have 6 or more drinks on one occasion?	Never	Less than once a month	Once a month	Once a week	Daily or almost daily	
Total Score						

From: AUDIT-C, a brief version of the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test. Available at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1097/01.ALC.0000164374.32229.A2/pdf>

Your drinking could be harmful if your total score is:

▶ **3 or higher** for women and people 65 or older

▶ **4 or higher** for men

If you are concerned about your alcohol use, talk with a health care provider about how your drinking may be affecting you.

Resources

Visit rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov.

Go to cdc.gov and search **alcohol use and your health**.

Visit nyc.gov/health and search **alcohol**.

Call **888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355)** for free and confidential support.

