

# Health Bulletin

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

#83 in a series of Health Bulletins on issues of pressing interest to all New Yorkers



**EXCESSIVE DRINKING  
IS DANGEROUS.**

**Stop drinking while you're still thinking.**



• Available in Spanish and Chinese: call 311 or visit [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health)  
• Disponible en español: llame al 311 o visite [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health)  
• 需要中文服務 - 可電 311 或造訪網址 [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health)



## How Much Is Too Much?

### For men:

- **Excessive drinking** is defined as 5 or more drinks in a short period of time, such as a 2-hour period, or
- More than 14 drinks in a week.

### For women and people 65 and older:

- **Excessive drinking** is defined as 4 or more drinks in a short period of time, such as a 2-hour period, or
- More than 7 drinks in a week.

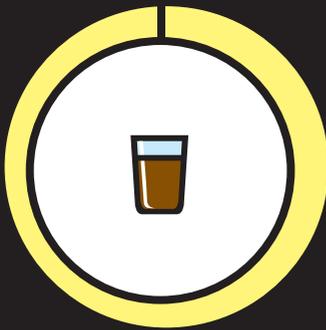
## What counts as 1 drink?



A 12-oz. glass, bottle, or can of beer or ale



A 5-oz. glass of wine, or a 3.5-oz. glass of fortified wine



A 1.5-oz. "shot" of distilled liquor or brandy (straight or in a mixed drink)

## Excessive Drinking Is Dangerous

It increases the risk of many problems.

- Cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver
- Hepatitis
- Osteoporosis
- Hypertension
- Enlarged heart or weakening of the heart muscle
- Cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, breast, and colon
- Weakened immune system
- Pneumonia and other infections
- Accidents and injuries
- Committing or being the victim of acts of violence
- Depression, dementia, and other mental disorders
- Suicide

## Sometimes Any Drinking Can Be Harmful

It is safest to avoid alcohol altogether if you:

- Will be driving or operating machinery
- Are pregnant or trying to become pregnant
- Are caring for children or others
- Have a personal history of alcohol or drug dependence
- Are taking prescription or over-the-counter medications that interact with alcohol
- Are under legal drinking age (21)
  - Children and adolescents who drink are at much higher risk for motor-vehicle crashes and alcohol-related brain damage.
  - The younger people are when they start drinking, the more likely they are to have problems with alcohol use as adults.

Be extra cautious about drinking if you have:

- A family history of alcohol or drug dependence
- Certain illnesses, such as diabetes, congestive heart failure, or long-term stomach, pancreas, or liver problems – even one drink a day can accelerate liver damage in people with hepatitis
- A history of depression
- A psychiatric illness

## What Is Alcohol Dependence?

It is a health condition that often gets worse unless it is addressed.

*Symptoms include:*

- **Craving** – a strong urge to drink
- **Loss of control** – being unable to stop drinking
- **Physical dependence** – withdrawal symptoms (nausea, sweating, shakiness, anxiety)
- **Increased tolerance** – the need to drink greater amounts of alcohol to feel its effects
- **Blackouts** – forgetting what happens when drinking



## Problem Drinking Is Treatable

**Many treatment options are available, including medications.**

- Looking honestly at your own drinking and its effects on you and others can be difficult. But honesty is usually the first and most important step in getting help.
- For help and information, talk to your doctor or call LifeNet (see **More Information**).

### **Don't give up!**

People can and do get better, every day.  
Recovery is possible.

## More Information and Help

- **For help with alcohol or drug use problems:** call 311 or LifeNet (800-543-3638)
- **Spanish LifeNet:** 877-AYUDESE (877-298-3373)
- **Asian LifeNet (Mandarin, Cantonese and Korean):** 877-990-8585
- **Alcoholics Anonymous:** [www.nyintergroup.org](http://www.nyintergroup.org) or 212-647-1680
- **National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information:** [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov) or 1-800-729-6686.

**DIAL  
311**

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# DO YOU HAVE A DRINKING PROBLEM?\*

Check the box next to your answer to each question.

Write your score for each question in the 'Score' column, and add up the total.

For the definition of a 'drink,' see 'What counts as 1 drink?'

	Over the past 12 months:	0	1	2	3	4	Score
<b>1</b>	<b>How often have you had a drink that contained alcohol?</b>	Never <input type="checkbox"/>	Monthly or less <input type="checkbox"/>	2 to 4 times a month <input type="checkbox"/>	2 to 3 times a week <input type="checkbox"/>	4 or more times a week <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>2</b>	<b>On a typical drinking day, how many drinks did you have?</b>	1 or 2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 or 4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 or 6 <input type="checkbox"/>	7 to 9 <input type="checkbox"/>	10 or more <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>3</b>	<b>How often did you have 6 or more drinks on one occasion?</b>	Never <input type="checkbox"/>	Less than monthly <input type="checkbox"/>	Monthly <input type="checkbox"/>	Weekly <input type="checkbox"/>	Daily or almost daily <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Total Score</b>							

## WHAT YOUR SCORE MEANS

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

**Talk to your doctor, or see More Information and Help.**

\* Adapted 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>



**New York City Department of  
Health and Mental Hygiene**

*Prepared in cooperation with:*  
Division of Mental Hygiene  
Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Use  
Prevention, Care and Treatment



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Telephone Interpretation in 170 Languages**