

Surrey's **big drink debate** It's your shout!

Alcohol's anaesthetic effects

Alcohol affects the brain like an anaesthetic. In fact, one of the very first anaesthetics ever used in medicine – ether – is based on alcohol. As with anaesthetics, the more alcohol we take the more of our brain it shuts down.

Are there immediate risks to health with alcohol?

If we only ever drank alcohol once or twice in a lifetime, alcohol would probably do us no significant harm. Most of us who do drink, however, do it a lot more often than that!

When it comes to our health, it's the effect of drinking regularly over months, years and decades that causes most harm.

If you drink sensibly, you should avoid any nasty consequence in both the short and the long term. If you drink to excess, your personal safety may be at risk.



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What's your poison?

It doesn't matter whether you take it in cocktails, beer, wine, cider or lager, it's the alcohol that counts.

Alcohol affects all kinds of cells in the body, causing changes in some and stopping others from working properly. As with most 'poisons', the more you take, the worse the effects are.

Is there a safe limit?

The medical folks are agreed – there is no completely 'safe' limit for alcohol. Drinking even small amounts carries risks to health. However, it's broadly accepted that the risks are low if you drink sensibly.

Drinking small amounts of alcohol (between 1 and 2 units per day) may protect against coronary heart disease. However, this benefit only applies to men over 40 and women past the menopause. It is not possible to “bank” these benefits beforehand!



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So what do we mean by 'sensible drinking'?

Simply put, it means not getting drunk. Being drunk means that the liver is overloaded and can't deal with the alcohol in the bloodstream quickly enough to stop it affecting the rest of the body. At the same time as it's making us feel happy, light-headed and talkative, it's also damaging cells – particularly cells in the liver.

How much is too much?

Men should drink no more than 3-4 units a day.
Women should drink no more than 2-3 units a day.

Hang on – what's a 'unit'?

An unit is equal to 10ml of pure alcohol.

Pint of Lager (alc 4% vol) = 2.3 units

125ml glass of wine (alc 12% vol) = 1.5 units

275ml bottle of Alcopop (alc 5% vol) = 1.4 units



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Top Tips for Healthier Drinking

Stick to the limits

The best way to stay healthy is not to drink more than the sensible daily limit and to have at least two alcohol-free days every week.

Eat before you drink

Food helps absorb alcohol.

Eat while you drink

Giving your stomach something other than alcohol to chew also prevents the booze irritating your gut.

Set a 'drinking budget' and stick to it

Use soft-drink 'spacers'

Alternate between alcoholic and soft drinks. It'll stop you getting dehydrated and lessen the chance of having a hangover in the morning.

Avoid drinking in rounds

Drinking in rounds can mean everyone ends up drinking more than they want to.

Hit the mixer

Dilute your spirit measures with more mixer and you can make each one last longer and drink less across the night.



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More Information

For more information on alcohol visit

www.surreybigdrinkdebate.nhs.uk

www.knowyourlimits.gov.uk

www.drinkaware.co.uk

Alcohol Services and Support in Surrey

Surrey Drug Care

This is a 24 hour confidential helpline giving support and information to drug and alcohol users, their families and friends.

Tel: 01483 300112

www.surreydrugcare.org.uk

Surrey Young People's Service

Tel: 01483 563095

Alcoholics Anonymous

Helpline: 0845 769 7555

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk



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