



**British Heart
Foundation**

**HEALTH AT WORK GUIDE
TO ALCOHOL AT WORK**

MISSION VERY POSSIBLE



**FIGHT
FOR EVERY
HEARTBEAT**

bhf.org.uk

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Welcome to your guide to promoting alcohol awareness in your workplace. Drinking too much alcohol can increase your risk of heart disease which is bad for health and bad for business.

This booklet will give you all the information, advice and ideas to set-up your own alcohol initiative and make raising alcohol awareness in your workplace a mission very possible.

How to use this toolkit

This is booklet 6 of your Health at Work toolkit. The complete toolkit covers:

- A successful programme (booklet 1)
- Physical activity (booklet 2)
- Healthy eating (booklet 3)
- Mental wellbeing (booklet 4)
- Stopping smoking (booklet 5)
- Alcohol awareness (booklet 6)

This booklet is all about raising awareness of alcohol in your workplace, and it's a crucial part in the overall mission.

Get more support online: where you see a **web link underlined**, it means you can find extra information online; alternatively visit the Health at Work website **bhf.org.uk/healthatwork**

WHY ALCOHOL AWARENESS MATTERS

Why alcohol awareness matters

Excessive drinking is the world’s number one risk factor for ill-health and premature death among 25-59 year olds, affecting businesses, families and individual employees¹. There is no absolute safe level of drinking and in some situations it’s never advisable to drink alcohol, for example if driving or operating machinery. This is because even small amounts of alcohol can affect reaction times, perception and control.

How much is too much?

Increased risk to health begins to occur when drinking above recommended guidelines:

Social or moderate drinking can become problem drinking when:

- The impact of drinking leads to time off work due to hangovers or feeling unwell in the morning.
- Drinking leads to poor sleep and this affects performance at work.
- Drinking affects the ability to carry out expected duties at home.
- Drinking is used to manage unwanted feelings or thoughts.

	Recommended guidelines	High-risk drinking
Men	It is recommended to drink no more than 3-4 units of alcohol per day e.g. one to two pints of beer	Regularly drinking more than 8 units a day or 50 units of alcohol a week e.g. 20 cans of lager and ten measures of spirit
Women	It is recommended to drink no more than 2-3 units of alcohol per day e.g. one large or two small glasses of wine	Regularly drinking more than 6 units a day or 35 units of alcohol a week e.g. three bottles of wine or 16 double vodka’s

*Both men and women should aim for at least two alcohol free days each week

What is a unit of alcohol?

Although 90% of people have heard of alcohol units, working out how many are in your drink can still be difficult. A third of beer drinkers don't know how many units are in their pint and three-quarters of wine drinkers can't correctly say how many units are in their glassⁱⁱ. It's therefore unsurprising that people often drink more than they realise.

The number of units in each drink depends on the size of the drink (the volume) and the strength (the percentage alcohol by volume or ABV). The higher the percentage strength of a drink and the larger the volume, the higher the total number of units will be.

$$\text{Units of alcohol} = \frac{\text{Volume (ml)} \times \text{ABV (\%)}}{1000}$$

For example: A 300ml can of beer of 5% ABV =

$$300 \times 5 / 1000 = 1.5 \text{ units of alcohol}$$

Alternatively use our online alcohol calculator to work out how many units you drink [bhf.org.uk/alcoholcalculator](https://www.bhf.org.uk/alcoholcalculator)

Health impacts

Staff who drink above recommended guidelines are at higher risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, liver disease and cancerⁱⁱⁱ.

When drinking excessively:

- Men are 1.8 times, and women are 1.3 times more likely to develop high blood pressure.
- Men are up to 2.5 times, and women are up to 1.7 times more likely to get mouth, neck and throat cancer.
- Women are 1.2 times more likely to get breast cancer.
- Men are twice, and women are 1.7 times more likely to develop liver problems.

But...

- Only a third of men and half of women know the daily maximum alcohol intake for their genderⁱⁱ.
- 25% of drinkers drink five or more drinks in one sitting^{iv}.
- Nearly one-third of adults drink more than the recommended amount^v.

These common drinks below show you how many units are in each drink.

1.5

units



Small glass red / white / rose wine
(125ml, ABV 12%)

2.1

units



Standard glass red / white / rose wine
(175ml, ABV 12%)

3

units



Large glass red / white / rose wine
(250ml, ABV 12%)

2

units



Pint of lower strength lager / beer / cider
(ABV 3.6%)

3

units



Pint of higher strength lager / beer / cider
(ABV 5.2%)

1.7

units



Bottle of lager / beer / cider
(330ml, ABV 5%)

2

units



Can of lager / beer / cider
(440ml, ABV 4.5%)

1.5

units



Alcopop
(275ml, ABV 5.5%)

1

unit



Single small shot of spirits
(25ml, ABV 40%)

Did you know that a glass of wine can have the same amount of calories as four cookies? How about a pint of lager – surprised to hear it's often the calorific equivalent of a slice of pizza?

Being high in sugar means alcohol contains lots of calories – seven calories a gram in fact, almost as many as pure fat! And that's before the bar snacks and greasy breakfast.

Calories in alcohol

Calories from alcohol are 'empty calories', they have no nutritional value. Most alcoholic drinks contain traces of vitamins and minerals, but not usually in amounts that make any significant contribution to our health.

By cutting back on the amount you drink, it can significantly help to reduce your calorie intake. It can be useful to know that many alcoholic brands now have 'light' low alcohol alternatives containing less calories. Another way to drink less calories is to opt for a low calorie mixer such as a diet coke or soda. Drinking water or low calorie soft drinks between alcoholic drinks is not only a good way to reduce your calorie intake but also helps to reduce the amount of units you're drinking.

Why it matters for employers

If you help your staff to drink responsibly, your whole business benefits from:

- improved health of employees
- improved productivity
- reduced absenteeism
- reduced workplace accidents and injuries
- increased staff loyalty
- improved working environment and corporate public image
- contribution to corporate social responsibility.

Businesses in the UK lose **£7.3bn** every year as a result of alcohol-related ill-health, time off work and lost productivity^{vi}.

Studies in Australia show that, on average, men who drink 14 units or more (5 large glasses of wine or 7 pints of beer) in one day each week and women who drink 9 units or more (3 large glasses of wine or pints of cider) on one day each week will be almost **22 times more likely to report in sick**^{vii}.

The Government has estimated that up to **17 million working days** per year are **lost to absenteeism** due to alcohol misuse, costing a total of £7.3bn per year to the UK economy and causing **40% of all workplace accidents**^{ix}.

Why it matters for employees

- Staff are more likely to drink within the recommended guidelines, reducing the likelihood of alcohol related absence, accidents and under-performance.
- Improved health and wellbeing.
- Staff with concerns about their own drinking will have awareness of how to access support, increasing job security.
- Staff will have confidence in the company alcohol policy that there are clear rules around drinking and that managers lead by example.
- Staff will be happier, healthier and more engaged.
- Managers who have concerns about someone else's drinking will find it easier to raise the issue.

YOUR ALCOHOL AWARE WORKPLACE

07

Creating an alcohol at work policy and raising awareness around alcohol will help build a healthier culture at work.

Doing this will require support from all managers, a team of champions and a greater organisational awareness of how to deal with alcohol issues.

Building a support team

The team should include staff or union representatives, occupational health or human resources staff and representatives from all areas of the business. The aim of the team is to:

- 1** Assess the needs of the organisation, in relation to what's currently available
- 2** Plan the strategy and timetable for running the initiative and engaging staff
- 3** Evaluate the campaign and plan ongoing work around alcohol awareness.

The alcohol support team should ensure the below steps are followed to create an alcohol aware workplace:



Planning your initiative

The planning stage should consider:

- how often the alcohol support team will meet
- how to launch and communicate the initiative in an engaging and imaginative way
- the timing, funding and other resources to be allocated alongside an action plan
- how to build evaluation and performance indicators into the programme.

Creating an alcohol policy

An alcohol policy should include:

- the company's expectations with regard to staff reporting to work fit for duty
- the rules around drinking alcohol while both on or pre-duty (including while at corporate events or entertaining clients)
- the procedures the company will take if employees are found to be in breach of the policy
- the support that will be provided to staff who are alcohol dependent.

For a comprehensive example of an alcohol policy see The SGAIP Model Workplace Alcohol Policy.

Awareness raising approaches

Your initiative should aim to increase awareness about alcohol-related ill-health, the risks related to alcohol and the workplace, and how self-awareness of drinking levels can lead to improved health and productivity. Awareness-raising can be in the form of interactive sessions with staff, training for managers, posters, flyers and online tools and links. Having permanent, visible communications reinforces the company's position on alcohol as well as protecting the company in relation to potential disciplinary action.

Interactive sessions with staff – could include demonstrations and information about what a unit of alcohol is, how drinking alcohol impairs judgment, you could use a pair of 'Beer Goggles' to make sessions interactive and fun and talk about the health impacts of drinking too much.

BHF resources you can download or order include – 10 minutes to change your life; Call time on alcohol and Eating well; Healthy eating for your heart.

Other resources can be found at <https://resources.drinkaware.co.uk>

Online information to share with employees:

- Alcohol self-assessment – nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Alcoholcalculator.aspx
- Alcohol myth buster – nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/alcohol-myths.aspx
- Alcohol support – nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Tipsoncuttingdown.aspx
- Handy tools – drinksmarter.org/handy-tools

NHS choices have some great tips to reduce alcohol intake for those who know that they drink over the recommended amount. See here nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Tipsoncuttingdown.aspx

Training for managers should include information about the impact of drinking too much alcohol, how to recognise and assess the signs and symptoms of heavy drinking, how to approach an employee with whom they may have concerns about and information about how to implement your alcohol policy – ensuring any disciplinary procedures, signposting or referral procedures are adhered to correctly.

For training, see the Alcohol Health Network.



A service like this is expensive to run but safety is crucial and in the long term it's really cost effective. We've saved money by reducing the issues that come with alcohol problems such as poor attendance and performance, as well as reducing the cost of training new staff.

The programme has a great impact with staff members, who say it has changed their whole lives, not just the time they spend at work.

At Transport for London the safety of our customers and staff is paramount, which means the safety of the duties our staff perform is vital. In order to prevent accidents and combat alcohol problems amongst our staff we offer a comprehensive alcohol service which encourages affected staff to come forward and seek help immediately and in return they are protected from disciplinary action. We raise awareness about this at staff inductions and by communicating about it throughout the year.

Once a staff member seeks help, we offer an initial assessment as well as liver function tests to assess the damage to their health. Employees will then sign-up to a three week assessment and support process during which time they don't work but still get paid. Over this time they attend three days each week and are assessed in groups by qualified counsellors specialised in addiction. Everything is done as a group to encourage peer support.

At the end of the three week period we make a treatment plan going forward. This can mean going back to work or can involve formal treatment. Whenever they return to work they go back on a 'monitoring certificate' which means they're regularly alcohol tested for six months. If they receive formal treatment they also attend a weekly support group for six months when they return to work.

Supporting staff who drink at hazardous and harmful levels

There is good evidence that asking individuals specific questions on their drinking levels and giving them personalised advice is effective in identifying those who are drinking too much and in reducing drinking to lower levels. This brief intervention can be effective but needs to be done sensitively and with high levels of confidentiality. A good example of a tool you could use is called AUDIT, Alcohol Use Disorders Identifications Test, which identifies staff at risk of alcohol related harm. This tool can be used by you or someone in your HR or Occupational Health department – you don't need to be a health care professional to use it effectively.

Using AUDIT, individuals are asked up to ten standardised questions and given five to ten minutes of feedback on their score, and advice on future action. The AUDIT measures alcohol-related risk out of a total of 40.

AUDIT – What the scores tell us:

- 0-8 – Low risk drinking
- 8-15 – Increasing risk drinking
- 16-19 – High risk drinking
- 19+ – High risk drinking and possibly dependent.

Typical health advice following the AUDIT questions would be:

- what their score means for their health
- what further risks could occur if they continued to drink at the same level
- information about recommended guidelines and the benefits of adhering to these
- where to go for further advice and information.

This is all information that you can find in this booklet or via the links that we have highlighted throughout. It is essential that clear referral pathways are in place for further advice, support and counselling if required.

If you don't feel comfortable using the AUDIT tool than why not signpost colleagues to a self-assessment instead. See here: nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Alcoholcalculator.aspx?Tag=Alcohol

IDEAS FOR EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Mocktail Bar Shake Off

Get staff to bring in their best Mocktail Recipes and hold a Shake Off – everyone makes their favourite non-alcoholic drink and someone judges the best. Why not try a 'Mock-ito' made with 6 mint leaves, 25ml lemon juice, 1ml agave syrup and topped-up with Ginger ale to get the Shake off started.

Go Dry for a Good Cause

Staff can 'go dry' for a month and run, swim or cycle on one evening of the week instead of going to the pub, to raise money for a good cause. An evening of sport can also bring people together as a reminder that there are ways to socialise other than going to the pub. Visit bhf.org.uk/events for sponsored activity events.

Drink Tracker Week

Simply track your drinking over the week using a Drink Diary – staff may be surprised how much they've drunk. You can find a Drink Diary in 10 minutes to change your life: Call time on alcohol booklet. Was it more or less than the recommended guidelines? When did they drink the most and why? Employees can also download an app to track their drinking here: nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Alcoholtracker.aspx

Hold a stall and /or invite a professional

Your local council can put you in touch with substance-misuse health professionals that can come to your workplace and hold a stall. Alternatively why not order in resources and create a stall of your own, include leaflets, factsheets, and small gifts with safe drinking messages. For low cost / free resources and products to use see resources.drinkaware.co.uk

Alcohol Quiz

Use quizzes and factsheets to educate employees in a fun and interactive way. To download our factsheets and quizzes please visit bhf.org.uk/alcoholatwork

National and local initiatives

It can be useful to link your alcohol awareness initiative to local, regional or national events – for example, **Alcohol Awareness Week** usually occurs in the third week of November every year, **Dry January** runs through the whole of January. Find out more at dryjanuary.org.uk

As well as all the information in this booklet, we've developed plenty more supportive resources. They're all free and designed especially for you, so make sure you take advantage of it.

Whenever you're facing a particular challenge in your Health at Work programme or want to share a success story, email us at healthatwork@bhf.org.uk

Health at Work website

Our Health at Work website – **bhf.org.uk/healthatwork** – was highly commended by the British Medical Association in 2011. You'll find all sorts of up-to-date information on running your Health at Work programme, as well as a range of resources to download.

Success Stories

Our website includes some brilliant success stories from other organisations – the perfect way to get ideas and inspiration. You can use the search engine to find a case study similar to your own organisation and health initiatives. Some stories are in written form, while others are short films. Either way, it's a great source of information. Visit **bhf.org.uk/successstories**

Health at Work training and events

The Health at Work website also includes information on our own Health at Work training, Heart Health workshops and Health and Wellbeing Days, along with news and updates. To see for yourself visit **bhf.org.uk/healthatwork**

BHF Heart Helpline

0300 330 3311

Similar cost to 01 and 02 numbers.
Lines are open 9am-5pm,
Monday to Friday.

Alcohol Health Network

Provide specialist training, IBA sessions, alcohol campaign co-creation, bespoke online tools and policy advice.

alcoholhealthnetwork.org.uk

**Health and Safety Executive
'Don't Mix It'**

A guide for employers on alcohol at work'

hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg240.pdf

Eurocare – European Workplace and Alcohol Toolkit

eurocare.org/eu_projects/ewa_deliverables/by_work_package/toolkit

Drinkaware

drinkaware.co.uk

Example alcohol policy

scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/Services/Alcohol/Partnership/Workplace-alcohol-policy

NHS choices

nhs.uk/LiveWell/Alcohol/Pages/Alcoholhome.aspx

Change 4 Life

nhs.uk/Change4Life/Pages/sneaky-drinks.aspx

Drink smarter

drinksmarter.org

Alcohol Concern / alcohol Awareness Week

alcoholconcern.org.uk/campaign/alcohol-awareness-week

BHF resources

- 10 minutes to change your life: Call time on alcohol
- Eating well: Healthy eating for your heart

To order or download your copies, visit bhf.org.uk/publications. Or call the BHF order line on **0870 600 6566** or email orderline@bhf.org.uk. Our publications are free of charge, but we would welcome a donation to support our fight for every heartbeat.

ⁱ EU Science Group (2011), Alcohol, Work and Productivity, European Alcohol Health Forum.

ⁱⁱ Op Cit Health Survey for England 2007.

ⁱⁱⁱ Your Drinking and You, NHS Leaflet 2012 [Online]. Accessible at http://www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/supporter-resources/downloads/408723_Your_Drinking_And_You.pdf

^{iv} APHO (2007) Indications of Public Health in the English Regions – Alcohol (Chapter 8).

^v General Lifestyle Survey 2011 [Online]. Accessible at <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ghs/general-lifestyle-survey/2011/rpt-chapter-2.html>

^{vi} Institute of Alcohol Studies Factsheet (2009) Alcohol and the Workplace; estimate at 2009/10 prices.

^{vii} Roche AM, Pidd K, Berry JG et al. (2008). Workers' drinking patterns: the impact on absenteeism in the Australian work-place. *Addiction*, 103:738–748.

^{viii} Douglas, Joanne (August 2013), 'Calderdale becomes first Yorkshire council to drug and alcohol-test employees' *The Huddersfeld Daily Examiner*.

^{ix} Code of Practice on the Management of Alcohol and Drug Related Issues. International Labour Organisation, 1995.

^x Babor et al (2001) Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Tool Guidelines for use in Primary Care, World Health Organisation.

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CONTACT US

To get in touch with the Health at Work team,
please email healthatwork@bhf.org.uk
or call 0300 330 3311.



**British Heart
Foundation**

Coronary heart disease is the UK's single biggest killer.

For over 50 years we've pioneered research that's transformed the lives of people living with heart and circulatory conditions. Our work has been central to the discoveries of vital treatments that are changing the fight against heart disease.

But so many people still need our help.

From babies born with life-threatening heart problems to the many Mums, Dads and Grandparents who survive a heart attack and endure the daily battles of heart failure.

Join our fight for every heartbeat in the UK. Every pound raised, minute of your time and donation to our shops will help make a difference to people's lives.

**FIGHT
FOR EVERY
HEARTBEAT**

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