

# Alcohol - do you know?

Employee alcohol awareness raising campaign





## Introduction

Drinking too much alcohol can have a negative effect on your health. This information will help you to understand what some of these negative effects could be, provide tips and let you know where you can go for help and support if you need it.

These pages contain information about avoiding illness, staying fit, making sound choices, remaining in control, and how making small changes can make a big difference to your life.

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# Alcohol and the Workplace

Drinking alcohol is seen by many as socially acceptable activity. It is often seen as a stress reliever following a hard days work in the office and also an good way to mix and network with people, both in and outside of work.

However, drinking can have a significant impact on your work.

Do you know that an **incredible 17 million working days in the UK** are lost due to alcohol related sickness every year? It also disrupts sleeping patterns, leaving you tired and less productive if you do make it into work.

If you arrive at work with raised levels of blood alcohol, you will increase the likelihood of making mistakes, errors of judgement and having accidents.

In the longer term if you're drinking over the recommended guidelines of 3-4 units (not much more than a pint of strong lager, beer or cider) a day for men and 2-3 units (no more than a standard 175ml glass of wine) a day for women, you are increasing your chances of suffering from health problems, including a number of cancers, stroke and liver disease.

### Our message to you is

- think before you drink
- be aware / more aware of the impact that alcohol misuse can have on your health and wellbeing
- use the information provided on where you can get help advice and assistance if you require support

We've tried to highlight the key issues and keep our information brief. There is quite a wealth of information already available on the internet. We'd like to acknowledge that we've accessed and used relevant information from various sites and have listed them within the help support and guidance pages

17 million working days  
are lost to alcohol-related  
sickness every year!



## How Much is too Much

### Units and Strengths of alcoholic drinks

#### How can you find out the strength of an alcoholic drink?

The “ABV” (Alcohol By Volume) will tell you the strength of your drink and is identified as a percentage. Drinks labels will say either ABV or Vol. A bottle of wine that says 13% ABV on its label will contain 13% pure alcohol.

#### What is a unit?

Alcohol is available in many different strengths depending on how it is produced

The amount of alcohol in a drink is measured in units. One unit is equivalent to 10 ml or 8g of pure alcohol. The size and strength of your drink will determine the number of units it contains.

It's all very well talking in units, but what does this really mean when you're on a night out at the pub or over dinner at home? The size and strength of your drink will determine the number of units it contains. Unfortunately it's not as simple as one drink, one unit.

A glass of wine could be 1 – 3+ units depending on the size of the glass and type of wine.

When people drink at home, they tend to pour measures that are larger than you get in their local pub. So you could be regularly drinking far more than you think.

You can work out the number of units in your drink with this handy sum:

$$\text{Strength (ABV)} \times \text{Volume (ml)} \div 1000 = \text{No. of units.}$$

#### For example

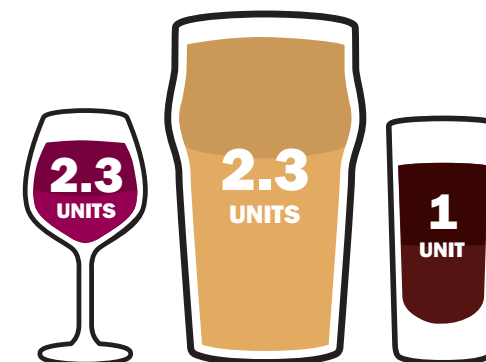
A standard glass of red wine (175ml) at 13% ABV would be

$$13 \text{ (ABV)} \times 175 \text{ (ml)} \div 1000 = 2.3 \text{ units}$$

Or for any easier option to calculate how much your drinking go to

- Change For Life drinks checker <http://www.nhs.uk/change4life/pages/understanding-alcohol.aspx>
- NHS - <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Alcoholtracker.aspx> - which includes iphone tracker and desktop tracker
- Drinkaware unit calculator <http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/tips-and-tools/drink-diary/>

Nearly one in three men and one in five women drink more than the NHS recommended unit guidelines for alcohol



## What are the safe drinking guidelines?

The government advises that:-



**WOMEN** - should not regularly\* drink more than 2 to 3 units of alcohol a day. That's no more than a standard 175ml glass of wine (ABV 13%)



**MEN** - should not regularly\* drink more than 3 to 4 units of alcohol a day. That's not much more than a pint of strong lager, beer or cider (ABV 5.2%)

\* "Regularly" means drinking this amount most days or every day.

ABV is the percentage of alcohol in the drink.

Regularly drinking more than this has a wide range of health risks.

It doesn't make a difference if you're drinking every day or once a fortnight, exceeding the recommended guidelines is risky.

### Why are the recommended units less for women?

The Government advises that adult women should not regularly exceed more than 2-3 units of alcohol a day, while the limit for men is 3-4 units per day.

Men and women experience many of the same ill effects of alcohol. However, women's physical make-up affects the way that alcohol is processed in the body:

- Women's bodies have 10% more fat than men's and they have less fluid to dilute the alcohol, so the concentration of alcohol in the body is higher
- The average woman (58kg or 9st) weighs considerably less than the average man (70kg or 11st) and has correspondingly less tissue to absorb alcohol
- Alcohol stays longer in a woman's system before being metabolised and so has greater effect.

Regularly drinking over the recommended guidelines increases your chances of suffering from health problems including a number of cancers, stroke and liver disease



# What is binge drinking?

Binge drinking is drinking large amount in a short space of time to get drunk or feel the effects of alcohol.

Drinking a large amount of alcohol over a short period of time may be significantly worse for your health than frequently drinking small quantities. It's not advisable to save up your weekly units so you can drink them all on a Friday night.

Two large glasses of wine may actually not seem like very much. But this is equivalent to drinking six units of alcohol. If you drink these within a short space of time (one hour) it will raise your blood alcohol concentration (BAC) and could make you drunk very quickly.

Drinking the same amount over several hours, and accompanied by food, will not have the same affect on your BAC.

Binge drinking on a regular basis can

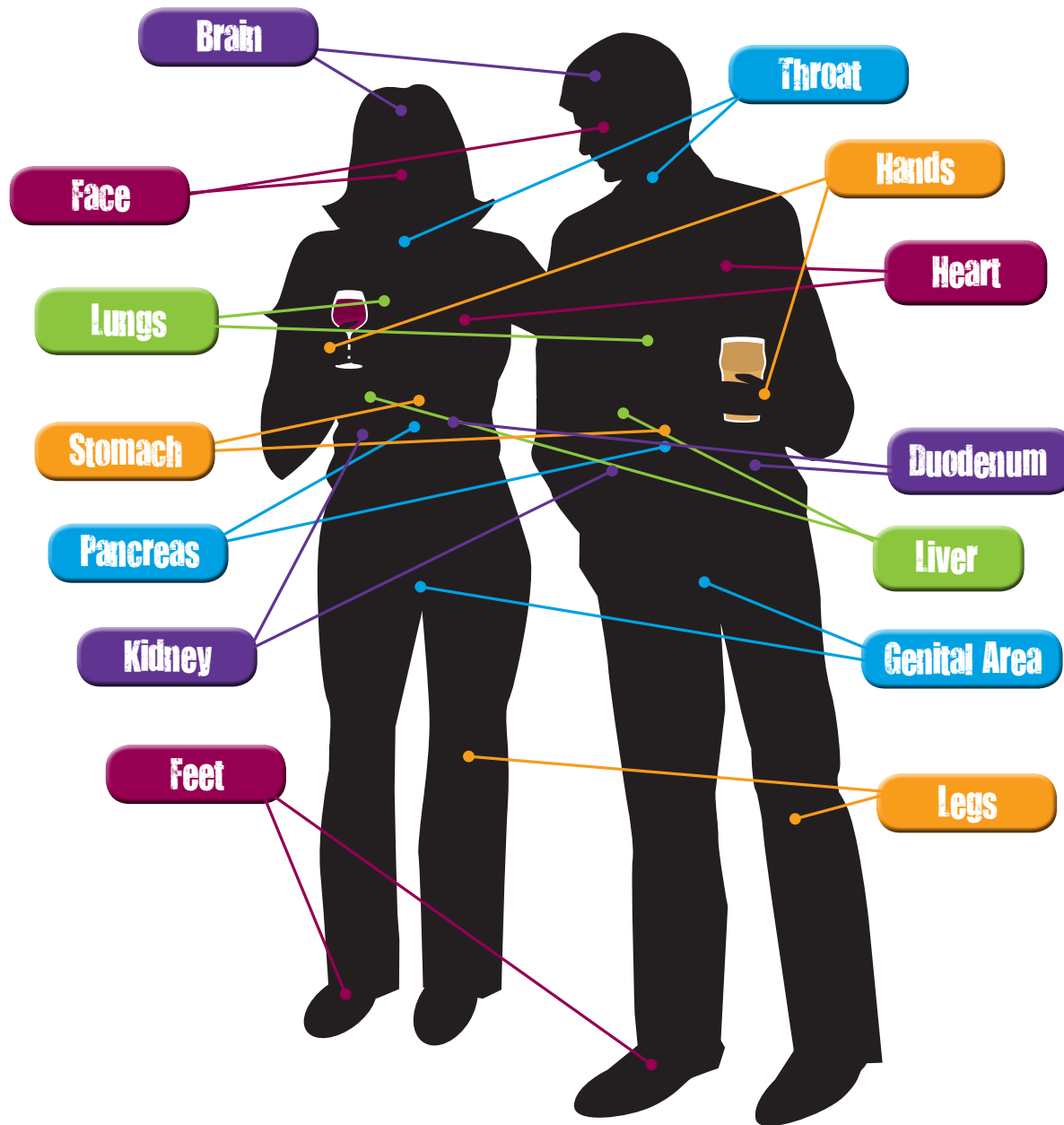
- Put strain on your liver and lead to liver disease which cannot be cured
- Increase your blood pressure and heart rate
- Give you bad skin through dehydration

Binge drinking when you're young can become a habit. Studies show that those who drink a lot in their teens and early 20s are up to twice as likely as light drinkers to be binge drinking 25 years later.

When large amounts of alcohol are consumed in a short period of time you can also get alcohol poisoning - the body becomes poisoned by large amounts of alcohol. Violent vomiting is usually the first symptom of alcohol poisoning. Other signs are extreme sleepiness, unconsciousness, difficulty breathing, dangerously low blood sugar and seizures. Alcohol poisoning can also cause death in some cases

For more information on binge drinking go to <http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/facts/binge-drinking>





## Health Risks

**The more you drink the greater the health risks**

Drinking too much alcohol increases your risk of becoming ill, with over 60 different medical conditions being linked to alcohol including **liver disease, cancer, osteoporosis, stomach ulcers, raised blood pressure, stroke and dementia**. It also increases the risks of wider social impacts such as domestic violence, mental illness and sexually transmitted infections.

Whilst you can see some of the immediate effects of excessive drinking, eg slurred speech, uncoordinated movements, impaired judgement, nausea/vomiting etc, the longer term effects can be very serious, and may remain undetected for many years.



## Find out where alcohol damage can occur

### Brain

<http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/aa63/aa63.htm>

- Black outs
- Serious memory loss
- Damage to nervous system
- Poor concentration
- Blurred vision
- Headaches
- Insomnia
- Restlessness
- Loss of balance
- Loss of inhibitions
- Hallucinations
- Epilepsy
- Dementia
- Aggressive, irrational behaviour,
- Arguments
- Violence
- Depression/mood swings
- Anxiety/unknown fears,

### Throat

<http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/cancer-info/healthyliving/alcohol/howdoweknow>

- Nervousness
- Loss of self esteem/purpose
- Mouth cancer
- Throat cancer
- Chronic coughing
- Cancer of the Oesophagus
- Oesophagus bleeding

### Face

*Drinkaware* <http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/alcohol-and-you/health/how-alcohol-affects-your-appearance>

- Blood-shot eyes
- Puffy eyes
- 'Drinkers nose'
- Florid complexion
- Spider-naevi on hands and face
- Premature ageing

### Heart

*Drinkaware* <http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/facts/factsheets/alcohol-and-heart-disease>

- Cardiomyopathy
- Heart failure
- High blood pressure
- Rapid pulse
- Weakness of heart muscle
- Angina
- Impaired blood clotting

### Stomach

- Inflammation of the stomach
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Malnutrition
- Vitamin deficiency
- Ulcer





# Alcohol - do you know?

## Liver

Reduced resistance to infection  
Increased risk of pneumonia and tuberculosis  
Frequent colds

*Liver (patient UK)* <http://www.patient.co.uk/health/Alcohol-and-Liver-Disease.htm>

Liver damage:  
Liver cirrhosis  
Liver cancer  
Fatty liver  
Hepatitis

## Pancreas

Inflammation of the pancreas

## Duodenum

Duodenal ulcer

## Kidney

Impaired kidney function  
Urinary infections

## Genital Area

*Drinkaware* <http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/alcohol-and-you/health/is-alcohol-harming-your-fertility>

Sexually transmitted diseases,  
Reduced fertility,  
In men: Impaired sexual performance, impotence.

In women: unwanted pregnancies, miscarriages, impaired sexual performance, menstrual disturbance

## Hands

Trembling hands  
Tingling fingers  
Numbness  
Loss of sensation in the fingers  
Peripheral neuritis

## Legs

Impaired sensation leading to falls and numbness causing skin damage

## Feet

Numb tingling toes  
Peripheral neuritis

## Alcohol, fertility and pregnancy

In men, excessive alcohol lowers testosterone levels and sperm quality and quantity, reducing chances of conceiving. It can also reduce libido, and cause impotence. However, cutting down on what you drink can reverse these effects quickly.

Pregnant women, or those trying to conceive, should avoid alcoholic drinks. If you're pregnant, when you drink alcohol it passes from your blood, through the placenta, to your baby. Because your baby is still developing, it can't process alcohol as well as you can, and too much exposure to alcohol can seriously affect its development. Not drinking during pregnancy will help your baby develop and grow normally. However, if you choose to you should not exceed 1-2 units once or twice a week and should not get drunk. You could try swapping your usual drink for an alcohol-free version, or a non-alcoholic cocktail. For ideas on non alcoholic cocktails, go to <http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/alcohol-and-you/social-life/mocktailrecipes>



# Ways to cut down

We've got some suggestions to make to help you cut down the amount alcohol you may be drinking.

Why not try having a couple of drink free days a week, or looking at some of the tips that have been suggested for cutting down on a night out?

If you always unwind with a glass of wine or two you could try out one of the alternative options instead.

If you're trying to lose weight, or wondering why you're gaining weight, you might want to take a closer look at the number of calories in alcoholic drinks

# Hints and tips

Here's some more hints and tips for you to help you cut down on alcohol – why not post your top tip

- Keep a drinks diary – you'll probably be surprised at how much your drinking
- Alternate an alcoholic drink with a glass of water – this will help to prevent you becoming dehydrated.
- Don't drink on an empty stomach. If you do reach for snacks while drinking, opt for a healthier option – choose a sandwich instead of crisps or chips, or choose a chicken burger without mayonnaise instead of a kebab with garlic sauce.
- Drinking in rounds can mean you end up drinking more than you intended. Opt out and drink at your own pace.
- Try cutting down with a friend, as you'll be more likely to stick to it with moral support.
- Eat a healthy dinner before you start drinking. Order or cook before you start drinking so you're not tempted to go for the less healthy options.

- Pace yourself by taking small sips.
- Avoid 'binge drinking' – some people are under the misapprehension that they can 'save up' their units to splurge at the weekend.
- If you're drinking white wine, why not add a splash of soda water to help the same number of units last longer

For more hints and tips go to

## CHANGE FOR LIFE

<http://www.nhs.uk/change4life>

## DRINKAWARE

<http://www.drinkaware.co.uk>

## NHS

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Tipsoncuttingdown.aspx>



# Have two drink free days a week to improve your health

If you've been drinking more than you should be, cutting back on alcohol can help your general well-being. You could start by setting aside two days in the week where you don't drink.

Once you start cutting back, you'll probably notice the benefits quite quickly:

- Feeling better in the mornings
- Having more energy and feeling less tired during the day
- Your skin may start to look better
- You'll start to feel in better shape
- You may stop gaining weight or lose some pounds
- Improved fertility (for men)

For more details on how alcohol can affect your appearance, go to <http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/alcohol-and-you/health/how-alcohol-affects-your-appearance>.

You should try to have at least two drink free days to improve your health



## Feel better

As time goes on, you may also find you're in a better mood more often. Heavy drinking can be linked to depression, and sometimes a hangover can leave you feeling anxious and low. If you already feel anxious or sad when you're sober, drinking can make this worse. So drinking less can mean that you feel happier, more of the time.

## Improve your health

Because regular drinking can affect your immune system, heavy drinkers can have more problems with infectious diseases. So if you cut down, your system will be able to fight off bugs more easily which can contribute to better general health.

There can also be other benefits – you may find you have more time to enjoy other things, and save money as well.

## Give your liver a rest

Did you know that your liver needs time to recover, even from small amounts of alcohol?

Your liver is your body's 'factory', carrying out, hundreds of jobs that are vital to life. It is very tough and able to continue to function when most of it is damaged. It can also repair itself – even renewing large sections.

Your liver has around 500 different functions.

### Importantly, it:

- fights infections and disease
- destroys and deals with poisons and drugs
- filters and cleans the blood
- controls the amount of cholesterol
- produces and maintains the balance of hormones
- produces chemicals – enzymes and other proteins – responsible for most of the chemical reactions in the body, for example, blood clotting and repairing tissue
- processes food once it has been digested
- produces bile to help break down food in the gut
- stores energy that can be used rapidly when the body needs it most
- stores sugars, vitamins and minerals, including iron
- repairs damage and renews itself.

Your liver has to deal with the alcohol you drink. If you're drinking too much, your liver has to literally soak up the punishment. With so few nerve endings to signal pain you won't know that your liver is complaining. If you're drinking a lot on a regular basis, chances are that you

will not feel anything happening until your liver has had enough. The harm to your liver at this stage will be severe – and could even be fatal.

Making an effort to have at least two to three alcohol free days a week will mean that that it gives your liver a rest and a chance to repair any damage, recover and reduce your risks of illness.

For more information go to Patient UK

<http://www.patient.co.uk/health/Alcohol-and-Liver-Disease.htm>



# Cut down on alcohol on a night out

Fancy a night out, but want to manage how much you drink?

There are lots of ways in which you can cut down or reduce how much you drink.

### Why not try

- Getting a cheaper round in by getting yourself a soft drink or water when its your turn
- Deciding the amount your going to have when your out, and stick to it
- Setting yourself a budget and only take out what you want to spend
- Trying a lower strength or smaller drink or add a mixer
- Telling your friends your trying to save money, or, watching your weight
- Not drinking before you go out, drinking plenty of water and taking your time with your drinks

Try these each time you go out and you'll soon start drinking less and saving money at the same time

For more tips and ideas go to <http://www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/Pages/cutting-down-alcohol.aspx>



# Alcohol isn't the only way to unwind

Stressful day in the office? Can't wait to go home and unwind with a glass or two of wine? Is this becoming a habit? Are you drinking a little bit more each time?

The amount you drink can slowly start increasing without you realising it.

So, before you pour that glass of wine, think about other ways to unwind – pictured are some ideas

These little changes can make a big impact on your health and some will even save you money!

See how many units you drink in a typical week with the drinks checker

<http://www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/Pages/understanding-alcohol.aspx>

Get some tips for cutting down <http://www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/Pages/understanding-alcohol.aspx>



Read a good book



Exercise



Start a new hobby



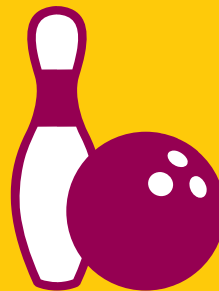
Enjoy a nice meal



Relax in the bath



Put the kettle on



Enjoy a family evening out



Walk the dog



Call a friend

# If you cut down on alcohol you may lose some pounds

### Did you know that alcohol contains calories?

- A glass of wine has the same calories as a slice of cake – 120-30 calories
- A pint of lager contains the same calories as a burger- 240-50 calories

Calories from alcohol are 'empty calories'- that means they have NO nutritional value.

Drinking alcohol also reduces the amount of fat your body burns for energy. Because alcohol can't be stored in your body, our body systems want to get rid of it and gives it priority over other functions such as absorbing nutrients and burning fat

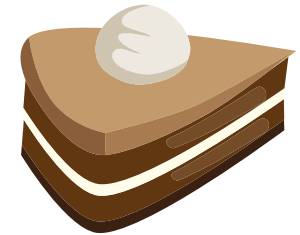
So, if you're putting on weight, trying to lose weight, or get fit, you might want to take a closer look at how much alcohol you're drinking!

For more information, go to

<http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/alcohol/pages/calories-in-alcohol.aspx>

<http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/facts/calories-in-alcohol>

<http://www.aquarius.org.uk/alcoholandcalories>





## Facts and figures

- Nearly one in three men and one in five women drink more than the NHS recommended weekly unit guidelines for alcohol
- 17 million working days in the UK are lost to alcohol-related sickness every year
- Regularly drinking over the recommended guidelines increases your chances of suffering from health problems including a number of cancers, stroke and liver disease
- A standard bottle of wine contains approximately 660 calories – equivalent to a large slice of chocolate cake
- Liver disease is the fifth biggest killer in England and Wales, after heart disease, cancer, stroke and lung disease. It is the only major cause of death still increasing year-on-year
- 76,000 facial injuries in the UK each year are linked to drunken violence.
- £6.4bn is lost to the UK economy through alcohol related sickness absence, the inability to work and premature deaths.

- Alcohol related sickness absence alone costs the UK about £1.5bn
- Alcohol is the only major cause of death still increasing year-on-year.
- Liver disease is the fifth biggest killer in England and Wales, after heart disease, cancer, stroke and lung disease.
- A combination of obesity and alcohol further increase the risk of liver disease.
- The average man drinks more alcohol than the average woman

### Locally across Leicestershire County and Rutland

- 1 in 4 adults drink at levels of increased risk to their health.
- 1 in 5 adults binge drink.
- 12,000 hospital admissions in 2010/11 were related in some way to alcohol (e.g. mental illness or assault).
- Alcohol misuse in Leicestershire alone costs a direct public services a staggering £50 - £60m every year.

### Nationally

- 8,790 deaths were related to alcohol in the UK in 2010, with two thirds (5890) being men
- The 55-74 age group had the highest level of alcohol related deaths in 2010.
- Alcoholic liver disease accounted for nearly two thirds of all alcohol-related deaths in 2010
- Alcohol-related illness or injury accounts for over 1 million hospital admissions per year in England
- £2.7 billion is spent on treating the severe effects of alcohol misuse

For more facts and figures on alcohol and the workplace go to

<http://www.ias.org.uk/resources/factsheets/factsheets.html>





## Help, Support and Guidance

There is a wide range of help support and guidance available to help you:-

NATURE OF SUPPORT	DETAILS	CONTACT DETAILS
County Council's Free confidential Counselling support for staff	<p>The Counselling Service is a counselling, support, advice and information service provided by qualified and accredited counsellors. It is a free service that is available to all County Council employees.</p> <p>The service is strictly confidential and no information that could identify you as a user of the service or not can be passed to anyone without your express permission. There are a few exceptions to this rule such as if it were disclosed that a child was in danger or if there was a serious and credible intent to suicide or serious self harm.</p> <p>The Employee Welfare Service offers an impartial listening service that can cover things of a personal nature - the sort of things that can affect us all from time to time. You may have money worries, family concerns or are coping with a loss. You may be feeling depressed, anxious or lonely.</p> <p>Your concerns may be connected with work for example, work changes, relationship difficulties, harassment or retirement.</p> <p>The service can also put you in contact with a range of specialist agencies such as family/children's services, money advice, mental health, carer's support and alcohol and drug services.</p> <p>You can refer yourself and do not have to go through anyone else. However, if you need to keep an appointment in work time you will need the agreement of your line manager.</p>	<p>'Being Well - Doing Well' - Employee Counselling Service</p> <p>Simon Bamkin, Employee Welfare Adviser 0116 305 7504 simon.bamkin@leics.gov.uk</p> <p>Alison Earl, Employee Welfare Adviser 0116 305 6178 alison.earl@leics.gov.uk</p>
Health Checks	See your local GP for a health check and advice on how to cut down	GP services

NATURE OF SUPPORT	DETAILS	CONTACT DETAILS
Alcohol advice and support	These treatment services provide a range of support dependent on your needs and include drop in services providing brief advice and a range of more structured treatment and group work	<p>Leicestershire County and Rutland Residents (Adults and Young People) Swanswell Trust 0300 303 5000, or go to <a href="http://www.swanswell.org/alcohol/index.asp">http://www.swanswell.org/alcohol/index.asp</a></p> <p>or through the County website <a href="http://www.drugs.org.uk/">http://www.drugs.org.uk/</a></p> <p>Leicester City Residents - Adults Alcohol Advice Centre 96 New Walk Leicester 0116 222 9545</p> <p>Leicester City Council - Childrens and Young People New Directions 29 New Walk Leicester 0116 204 7274</p> <p>If you are not a Leicester City, Leicestershire County or Rutland resident, contact your local council to find out who your local treatment provider is.</p>
Leicestershire County Council - Health and Safety advice and support	General health and safety advice and support for County Council Staff	Health and Wellbeing Team 0116 305 5515
Drinkline – the National helpline	Free and confidential helpline where you can get advice and support	0800 917 8282.
Alcoholics Anonymous	a support group for people who are dependent on alcohol. There are branches all over the country	Call 0845 769 7555 to find your nearest branch
Leicestershire County Council Employee Substance Misuse Policy	Explains the County Councils expectations of its staff in relation to the use of substances and how it can support those with problems	Intranet Site: substance_misuse_policy_and_guidance

NATURE OF SUPPORT	DETAILS	CONTACT DETAILS
Other alcohol related website link	Change 4 Life	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk/change4life">www.nhs.uk/change4life</a>
	Drinkaware	<a href="http://www.drinkaware.co.uk">www.drinkaware.co.uk</a>
	Institute of Alcohol Studies	<a href="http://www.ias.org.uk">www.ias.org.uk</a>
	NHS	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/alcohol/pages/alcoholhome.aspx">www.nhs.uk/livewell/alcohol/pages/alcoholhome.aspx</a>
	Cancer research UK	<a href="http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerinfo/healthyliving/alcohol/howdoweknow">http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerinfo/healthyliving/alcohol/howdoweknow</a>
	National institute on alcohol abuse and alcoholism	<a href="http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/aa63/aa63.htm">http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/aa63/aa63.htm</a>
	Patient UK	<a href="http://www.patient.co.uk/health/Alcohol-and-Liver-Disease.htm">http://www.patient.co.uk/health/Alcohol-and-Liver-Disease.htm</a>
	Aquarius	<a href="http://www.aquarius.org.uk/alcoholandcalories">http://www.aquarius.org.uk/alcoholandcalories</a>
	Diabetes UK	<a href="http://www.diabetes.org.uk">www.diabetes.org.uk</a>
	British Heart Foundation	<a href="http://www.bhf.org.uk/heart-health/prevention/healthy-eating/alcohol.aspx">http://www.bhf.org.uk/heart-health/prevention/healthy-eating/alcohol.aspx</a>
	British Liver Trust	<a href="http://www.britishlivertrust.org.uk">www.britishlivertrust.org.uk</a>

