

Drinking guidelines

Guidelines exist but personal factors will influence what moderate drinking means for you



What is moderate drinking?

There is no single definition of 'moderate drinking'. Some say it's drinking that doesn't cause problems for the drinker or for society. Others suggest it's about drinking within the range that maximises the known benefits of alcohol consumption without substantially increasing the risks.

One way of thinking about it is to look at some of the general guidelines available and consider how they fit your circumstances.

That's because people don't react to alcohol in the same way. How we define 'one drink' can differ too. And, finally, customs and cultures are different – what's considered moderate drinking in one country might not be in another.

Many governments produce official drinking guidelines, but these guidelines often vary between countries. Here's how some governments define moderate alcohol consumption:

- US: Two drinks a day for men and one drink a day for women – the guidelines state that drinking at these levels may provide some protection against heart disease. Twelve fluid ounces of beer counts as one drink
- South Africa: No more than two standard drinks (340ml or a half quart of beer) per day for women and no more than three standard drinks per day for men
- UK: Men should not regularly drink more than 3-4 units a day and women should not regularly drink more than 2-3 units a day. "Regularly" is defined as every day or most days of the week. A 440 ml serving of beer at 5% abv is 2.2 units
- Australia: No more than two standard drinks (10 grams of alcohol per standard drink) per day for both men and women and no more than four standard drinks on a single occasion

Where do you stand?

These are guidelines, not rules, so there will be exceptions. You also need to think about factors that are particular to you, such as your body weight, age, gender, medications and health status.

Remember that alcohol is best enjoyed when consumed at a leisurely pace in moderation.

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take action

Perhaps the best advice is to know your personal limits and to talk to your doctor to find out what level of drinking – if any – is right for you.

talkingalcohol.com

is a site dedicated to helping people make informed choices about alcohol

other websites

These sites contain further information that you may find useful. However, SABMiller is not responsible for the content of these sites.

- British Liver Trust, Calculating Units www.britishlivertrust.org.uk/home/the-liver/diet--liver-disease/what-about-alcohol.aspx
- Department of Health and Ageing, Australia, Alcohol www.alcoholguidelines.gov.au/internet/alcohol/publishing.nsf/Content/guide-adult
- Drinking & You (UK), What is a Drink? www.drinkingandyou.com/site/uk/what.htm
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Food Guidelines by Country www.fao.org/ag/humannutrition/nutritioneducation/fbdg/en/
- NHS Choices (UK), The Risks of Drinking Too Much www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Effectsofalcohol.aspx
- South African Guidelines for Healthy Eating www.fao.org/ag/humannutrition/nutritioneducation/fbdg/49849/en/zaf/

