Alcohol Advisory Information

1 What Happens when you drink alcohol?

1.1. For most people the noticeable effect of alcohol is the rapid release from anxieties and tensions. Gradually you feel more carefree and socially relaxed. The effects commonly include talkativeness, cheerfulness, contentment and sociability. Alcohol can, however, alter your perceptions and your behaviour.

1.2. Drinking affects decision making ability and judgement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2 units</td>
<td>Cheerfulness and increase in self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 units</td>
<td>Increased risk of accidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 units</td>
<td>Increased happiness, but impaired judgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10 units</td>
<td>Slurred speech, loss of self-control, possibly aggressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 units</td>
<td>Loss of memory, inability to walk straight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18+ units</td>
<td>Possible loss of consciousness and alcohol poisoning requiring hospital treatment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.4 Effects are based on a male, of average build. Females do not process alcohol as quickly or efficiently as males so the effects will be increased, more information is available.

1.5 Drinking too much may lead to issues including:

- Increased risk of being a victim of crime e.g. robbery, assault or accidents
- Poor decision-making
- Reduced ability to work or study
- Breakdown of friendships and relationships
- Risky sexual behaviour
- Aggression (assault, criminal conviction)
- Medical problems
- Regretful anti-social behaviours
Drinking Safely - How much is too much?

2.1. It is recommended to keep alcohol consumption within the recommended safe weekly limits and have a minimum of two alcohol free days per week, preferably consecutive days, to allow the liver to recover. To calculate your own intake of alcohol and to find out more about safe and sensible drinking go to Alcohol Concerns website. Regularly exceeding these guides to alcohol use may lead to health or dependency issues. In the short term, binge drinking may lead to the deterioration of physical and mental health, and associated social, professional, study and economic issues.

Binge Drinking

3.1. Binge drinking is the term commonly used to describe the consumption of an excessive amount of alcohol in a short time. If you drink quickly, pre-load (drink before going out) or drink to get drunk, you are far more likely to suffer the effects of binge drinking. Memory blackouts, accidents and aggressive or other regretful behaviour are all likely outcomes.

Identification of Staff and Students with Alcohol Related Concerns

4.1. Individuals with alcohol related concerns can only be helped if their issues are self-acknowledged. Serious problems are often concealed in a variety of ways by the individual concerned, so identifying a problem in oneself or others requires some basic insight. People with alcohol related issues do not always conform to a stereotype, and many are able to study or work on a regular basis.

4.2. A colleague or friend turning a blind eye to a suspected problem is understandable, but not helpful in the long term, as it delays the individual from accessing the help that they may need.

Alcohol Misuse and Dependency

5.1. It is important to realise that alcohol misuse can lead to alcohol dependency and each may affect a person individually.

5.2. Alcohol misuse is a pattern of alcohol consumption which adversely affects the person’s life (work, study, relationships, health etc.), this can lead to alcohol dependency a physical dependence upon alcohol, causing health issues and withdrawal symptoms when alcohol is not present in the body.
5.3. Signs of alcohol-related concerns include:

N.B. The signs of alcohol related problems should not be considered in isolation. Any of the below may be present for other reasons

- Smell of alcohol on breath
- Abnormal or drunken behaviour (e.g. aggression, sleepiness, unsteadiness)
- Slurred speech
- Irritability
- Tremors or 'shakes'
- Low mood
- Facial flushing
- Deterioration of personal appearance
- Frequent accidents at work or elsewhere
- Unexpected or unusual signs of injury e.g. bruising
- Poor work or study performance
- Unreliability
- Poor relationships with colleagues/friends
- Impaired concentration
- Tasks take longer to complete
- Problems remembering instructions
- Increased short term absence level
- Anti-social behaviour

The list is not exhaustive. Please refer to the Occupational Health Team for further information.

6  When Alcohol becomes a concern

6.1. If you feel that you are drinking too much, and that it is affecting you physically, emotionally or socially, please don’t be afraid to seek help. The University and outside agencies can provide confidential support or just a listening ear, whatever your issues, see Alcohol Resources.

6.2. If you are concerned that your attendance at work, lectures, tutorials or other related commitments are being affected, you should speak to your manager or tutor and be open about the reasons. Where there are alcohol issues, they may have discretion to support you in seeking help in your recovery and regarding your work or course at university.

7  Dealing with Alcohol Related Concerns

7.1. If during the working/study day you suspect that a colleague/friend has a problem with alcohol, please don’t keep your concerns to yourself, but access the Alcohol resources available to all throughout the University.
7.2. Students should contact their Personal Tutor and or The Student Wellbeing Services, if there is immediate danger contact University Security.

- Tel: 0191 208 3333
- Email: student.wellbeing@newcastle.ac.uk
- University Security 6-666

7.3. If possible staff should speak to their own line manager who should make a decision about whether to contact their own local HR Manager, if this is not possible staff can approach human resources directly. Human Resources staff will then take any support or safety action needed.

7.4. If you are engaged in university business outside of normal working hours and you feel that a colleague’s alcohol intake may diminish the quality of university business, you should seek an alternative colleague who can support you in attending to university business. E.g. if a colleague on call arrives under the influence of alcohol, the concerned staff member should also alert their own line manager as soon as possible.

7.5. The University regards an individual’s dependency on alcohol as a health and capability issue. Once identified, support will be provided as necessary. Privacy will be respected at all times.

7.6. The University will invoke the relevant formal procedures, including the disciplinary procedure where alcohol related misconduct occurs at:

- any University events
- events where you are representing the University
- both within and out with of normal working hours
- which threaten the, safety and or wellbeing of others or property
- which threaten the reputation of the university.

Related policies and documents:

ALCOHOL WELLBEING POLICY
ALCOHOL RESOURCES
STAFF, MANAGER AND STUDENT GUIDELINES