



## Alcohol advice after stroke

# Introduction

- Drinking alcohol could increase your risk of having another stroke.
- Drinking any alcohol has some level of risk. There is no safe amount to drink. However, you can lower your risk by staying within the recommended limit.
- Alcohol can increase the impact of symptoms caused by your stroke including: changes to speech, thinking, vision and balance.
- If fatigue is an issue for you, alcohol may make it worse.
- The Dept. of Health guidelines for safe drinking are 2-3 units a day, up to a maximum of 14 units per week for both men and women. With at least 2 drink free days per week.
- \*In a typical week, about 1 in 4 men and 1 in 7 women drink in excess of the safe drinking guidelines.
- Heavy drinking (5 units or more a day) is associated with increased risk of both haemorrhagic and ischaemic stroke.
- Large quantities of alcohol causes an increase in blood pressure, a major stroke risk factor. This includes a single alcoholic binge (6 units or more of alcohol in one sitting).
- There is some research that reports small amounts of alcohol (e.g. 1 unit of wine per day) may slightly reduce the risk of stroke.

\*[[Scottish Health Survey \(2018\), revised 2020](#)]





**How much do you drink ?**

## How much do you drink?





**What is a unit of alcohol ?**

## What is a Unit of Alcohol?

- A unit of alcohol is a measure of the amount of alcohol there is in your drink.
- The size and strength of your drink determines how many units it contains. The strength of alcohol is measured by the percentage of alcohol by volume (% ABV).
- In the UK one unit is 10ml of pure (100% ABV) alcohol. This is equivalent to:
  - 76ml of standard strength wine (13% ABV)
  - 250ml (or just under half a pint) of beer (4% ABV)
  - 25ml of spirit (40% ABV)
- You can calculate the units in any drink by using the following method.  
$$\text{Strength (ABV)} \times \text{Volume (ml)} - 1000 = \text{Units}$$

eg.  $4.7\% \times 330 \text{ ml} = 1551 - 1000 = 1.551$  units.



## Medications and alcohol

## Medications and alcohol after stroke

- Warfarin, used as a Blood Thinner (anticoagulant) can be affected by alcohol consumption, some foods, certain fruit juices and herbal medicines
- Changes in your drinking habits, adding supplement or radically changing your diet should be discussed with your doctor or nurse first
- Heavy or binge drinking of 6 or more units can increase your blood pressure, so should be avoided
- **FOR YOUR SAFETY ALWAYS CARRY YOUR ANTICOAGULANT CARD** and inform health professionals of their use





**Benefits of cutting down**

## The benefits of cutting down

Drinking less can have a positive effect on your overall health and wellbeing. Some of the benefits of cutting down include:



Losing weight



Sleeping better



Reducing stress



Avoiding hangovers



Improving your concentration



Saving money



Feeling better about yourself



Reducing the risk of serious health conditions

## Information used to create this resource

Information used to create this resource has been taken with kind permission from:

- [https://www.chss.org.uk/documents/2019/10/e7\\_alcohol.pdf](https://www.chss.org.uk/documents/2019/10/e7_alcohol.pdf)
- <https://www.chss.org.uk/stroke-information-and-support/reducing-your-risk-of-stroke/moderate-alcohol-after-stroke/>
- <https://www.chss.org.uk/chest-information-and-support/looking-after-yourself/alcohol/>
- <https://www.chsselearning.org.uk/advancing-modules/topic-loops/alcohol/>

Other websites are also referred to/signposted in this resource including:

- <https://www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/calculating-alcohol-units/>
- <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/>

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