

Alcohol & Women

The British Medical Association make a recommendation of suggested sensible Alcohol intake for women as:-

14 UNITS per week

As opposed to 21 UNITS for men

Where 1 UNIT

= one standard glass of wine

= ½ pint ordinary strength beer or cider

= one single measure of spirits

Why are the limits for women lower?

Women are usually more at risk from alcohol for several reasons:

- ◆ Women normally weigh less than men
- ◆ Women also tend to have a lesser amount of water in proportion to their body weight (50%) than men (60%). This means that the blood alcohol concentration is higher in a woman than a man after they consume the same amount of drinks, meaning that they will become more intoxicated. Women also absorb alcohol faster and therefore become drunk sooner.

HEALTH PROBLEMS

A woman is more likely to damage her health, (i.e. Liver Disease) after a shorter heavy drinking period. Women who drink excessively run a higher risk of death than their male counterpart. A woman will also develop signs of alcohol dependency (e.g. showing withdrawal symptoms) much sooner and with lower levels of alcohol consumption than a man.

Alcohol and the Menstrual Cycle

The effects of alcohol are more variable on a woman than on a man. A woman is particularly sensitive to alcohol during two stages of her menstrual cycle.

1. The pre-menstrual stage just before a period.
2. During ovulation in the middle of the cycle.

This means that a woman will become drunk much quicker during these times on a smaller quantity of alcohol than they would usually consume.

For a woman who suffers pre-menstrual tension and who uses alcohol to relieve the symptoms, they run the risk of using more alcohol at a time when they will be affected by it to a far greater extent.

Alcohol and the Contraceptive Pill

The contraceptive pill will actually even out a woman's body's response to alcohol in that she will both absorb and burn up alcohol at a slower rate therefore taking longer to become drunk and remaining intoxicated much longer.

Alcohol and Babies

Alcohol will travel easily from a mother's bloodstream to the foetus. Even moderate drinking in pregnancy may lead to Foetal Alcohol Syndrome. This could result in babies being born who are significantly smaller, may be slower in developing mentally and physically or may even have physical abnormalities.

The medical advice is not to drink whilst pregnant, especially during the first few weeks. If you are going to drink then limit it to one or two units per week.

You should also remember that alcohol is carried in a woman's breast milk in the same level of concentration as it is in her blood. So if you are breast feeding your child you could still cause it damage.

YOU CAN REQUEST TO SPEAK TO A FEMALE COUNSELLOR ABOUT THESE ISSUES IF YOU PREFER.

REFERRAL PATHWAYS

Probation

Workplace Welfare Teams

Social Services

Women's Aid

Hospitals

South Wales Police

(Domestic Violence Unit)

General Practitioners

Community Medical Teams

Voluntary & Private Organisations

WGCADA Staff

Other Agencies

To Refer Someone Please Contact any of the below offices:-

WGCADA (Swansea)

(Main Office)

40 St James Crescent, Uplands, Swansea

Telephone: 01792 472519

Email wgcada@hotmail.com

WGCADA (Neath)

(Abstinence)

30 Victoria Gardens, Neath

Telephone: 01639 620222

WGCADA (Neath)

(Harm Reduction)

15 Victoria Gardens, Neath

Telephone: 01639 633630

WGCADA (Port Talbot)

(Harm Reduction)

37 Commercial Road, Taibach, Port Talbot

Telephone: 01639 890863

WGCADA (Bridgend)

(Abstinence/Harm Reduction)

7 Gaylard Buildings, Court Road, Bridgend

Telephone: 01656 667717