

# Alcohol and Liver Disease

18 shouldn't drink any alcohol at all. We should delay the start of drinking as long as possible because it can affect your brain growth and lead to alcohol related problems and diseases later in life.

Pregnant women should avoid drinking any alcohol because it can harm the baby. You should also try to avoid alcohol while breastfeeding because it will come through your milk to your baby.

## Is there a healthy amount of alcohol?

There is no 'healthy' amount of alcohol. Your body can react and fix itself if you drink a small amount on rare occasions. But too much alcohol regularly can seriously damage our bodies and minds.

There are many things that can affect your body's reaction to alcohol including:

- The amount of alcohol in a drink – look at the bottle to see how many 'standards' are in it
- How healthy you were before drinking – do you have any health conditions?
- How much you weigh – the less you weigh, the less alcohol you should be drinking.

## What are the alcohol recommendations?

If you drink alcohol, it's recommended you should have up to 10 standard drinks per week and no more than 4 standard drinks in one day.

Because of alcohols negative effects and the increased risk and impulsive behaviours, those under the age of



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## What does too much alcohol do to my body?

- The damage to your body increases with the amount of alcohol you drink
- Too much alcohol causes accidents, injuries, strong emotions, violence, hangovers, headaches and vomiting
- Long term damage to your body from alcohol builds up over time and
- One of the main problems is liver damage.

Your liver is a big filter that takes away toxins from your body. But when you drink too much, toxins get trapped in the liver and makes your liver sick. If you are drinking all the time without giving your liver a chance to get better, the liver can eventually shut down and make you seriously ill.

## What happens to you when your liver is sick?

- Yellow looking skin and eyes
- Belly pain and swelling
- Leg swelling
- Itchy skin
- Dark coloured wee
- Pale coloured poo
- Mood changes, feeling confused, feeling tired all of the time
- Spider veins all over your body
- Can lead to cancer.

People drink for many different reasons; sometimes they want to party, they feel sad, lonely or had bad things happen to them in the past and want to forget. Your doctor and health clinic can help, particularly if you or others are worried about your drinking.

Your doctor will ask you about your drinking habits and recommend a few strategies to reduce your drinking. They also might order regular blood tests to check your liver. If the liver isn't working properly, the doctor might want a liver sample to look at it closely under the microscope. If your liver is sick because of alcohol, you must try to cut down or even stop drinking completely. Your health clinic and GP can support you in your journey to stop drinking and can refer you if necessary to others like psychologists, liver doctors, nutritionists and Traditional healers to help.

