Alcohol

Student life can be fun and exhilarating as well as stressful at times. Socialising often occurs at the Student Union and other venues where alcohol is available. New students eager to form new friendships may use alcohol to relax and overcome their inhibitions. If it is consumed in moderation (within agreed health limits) it can help people relax and unwind after a hard day. If not it can lead to health problems, unplanned pregnancies, accidents and relationship breakdowns.

There are certain risk factors that increase our likelihood of becoming dependent on alcohol. These include social anxiety, having an impulsive personality or a family history of alcohol abuse.

This leaflet provides some useful information to enable you to make informed choices about your alcohol consumption.

The facts about alcohol

- From a health perspective, alcohol is usually measured in units.
  - One pint of strong lager (5% alc vol) = 3 units
  - One pint standard strength lager (3-3.5% alc vol) = 2 units
  - One bottle (275ml) alcopop (5.5% alc vol) = 1.5 units
  - One standard (175ml) glass of wine (12% alc vol) = 2 units
  - One measure (25ml) of spirit = 1 unit
- It is recommended that men drink no more than 3 – 4 units per day and women no more than 2 – 3 units per day.
- One unit is 8g or about 10ml of pure alcohol (no matter how diluted it is in a drink).
- Alcohol is full of calories, however contains no vitamin or minerals.
- It usually takes 1 hour to eliminate 1 unit of alcohol from your body (although the exact amount depends on age, weight, sex).
- Alcohol can pass through the placenta and harm the unborn child.
- UK driving limit is 80mg of alcohol per 100ml blood (equivalent to approx 2 pints regular strength lager or two small glasses of wine).
- Mixing alcohol with energy drinks raises the risk of harm as caffeine in the drinks can mask the drunk feeling.
- The faster you absorb alcohol, the higher your blood alcohol level and the greater the effect. Absorption is quicker if you are young, you are female (women have more fat and less water than males to dilute the alcohol), you are dehydrated or you drink on an empty stomach.
What happens when you drink?

The short-term effects of alcohol consumption vary between individuals. Below are some side effects typical in men of average build.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
<th>EFFECT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 2 units</td>
<td>Cheerfulness &amp; increase in self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 units</td>
<td>Increased risk of accident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 units</td>
<td>Often increased happiness, but often significantly impaired judgement</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 units</td>
<td>Above the legal driving limit</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 units</td>
<td>Slurred speech, loss of self control, possibly aggressive</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 units</td>
<td>Inability to walk straight, loss of memory</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 units</td>
<td>Nearing toxic levels. Continued drinking will lead to loss of consciousness</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Student Life – high risk times for drinking

- The first 2-3 weeks of term (pressure to mix with friends in addition to low academic demands).
- Right before, during or immediately after exams (for stress management).
- After handing in a major assignment (as sleep deprivation adds more impairment).
- Following the breakdown of romantic relationships.
- Graduation.
How can I tell if I have a problem?

Here are some quick clues:

- Inability to control drinking – it seems that regardless of what you decide beforehand, you frequently end up drunk.
- Using alcohol to escape problems.
- A change in personality.
- A high tolerance level – drinking just about everybody under the table.
- Blackouts – sometimes not remembering what happened while drinking.
- Concern shown by family & friends about drinking.

How can I reduce the level of risk of harm?

- by keeping to the recommended limit of units for men (3-4 a day) and women (2-3 a day) for the entire session and drinking no more than one drink per hour.
- by planning whether or not you will drink and what you will drink prior to the event (mindful that abstaining is the safest choice).
- by knowing what you are drinking and not leaving a drink unattended and then consuming it.
- by drinking more slowly and alternating alcoholic and non alcohol drinks (and caffeine free) throughout the evening.
- by eating a meal before drinking.
- by knowing how you will get home safely before you go out.
- by having at least 2 alcohol free days a week.
- by replacing your usual drink with one that contains less alcohol.
- by finding other ways to relax e.g. sport, yoga, club memberships.

Where can I get support?

You can talk confidentially to your GP or the University of Leicester Counselling and Wellbeing Service.

T: 0116 223 1780, E: counselling@le.ac.uk

If you have financial problems you may need to consult the Welfare Service for financial advice

T: 0116 223 1185, E: welfare@le.ac.uk
Local community specialist services:

**Alcohol Problems Advisory Service**
T: 0845 7626316
www.apas.org.uk

**Drinkline**
T: 0800 917 8282 (Best time to phone 9.00 a.m. – 11.00 p.m.)
They operate 24 hours per day, 365 days a year.
Advice, information and support for anyone concerned about their own, or someone else’s drinking.

**Leicester Recovery Partnership**
T: 0116 2256400
www.leicesterrecoverypartnership.co.uk

**Health Information Service**
T: 0845 4647  (number may change to 111 in future)
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
The Student Support Services (SSS) have a web page for other student services that can provide information and assistance for a wide range of issues. This can be accessed at www.le.ac.uk/ssds

YOU DON’T HAVE TO DRINK TO HAVE A GOOD TIME. IF YOU CHOOSE TO DO SO MAKE SURE YOU ARE FULLY INFORMED OF THE POTENTIAL RISKS SO THAT YOU CAN MAKE THE BEST CHOICES FOR YOURSELF. KNOW YOUR LIMITS SO THAT YOU CAN ACHIEVE YOUR FULL POTENTIAL IN RELATION TO YOUR STUDIES AND OTHER AREAS OF YOUR LIFE.
Where to find Counselling and Wellbeing

Our entrance is at the rear of the building located directly on the junction of University Road and Welford Road. We have a ramp and there is a large sign on the wall. The building is accessible to wheelchair users.

Contact Details

Counselling and Wellbeing
University of Leicester
161 Welford Road
Leicester
LE2 6BF

T: 0116 223 1780
F: 0116 223 1269

www.le.ac.uk/counselling

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