

V.I.S. BOX DOWNLOADABLE RESOURCES

- ALTERNATIVES:** ALCOHOL FACT SHEET
RESOURCE SHEET: VIS/AFS/2.1
PUBLISHED: 01/09/2008

Print multiple copies of this fact sheet to use as group hand-outs. The details given on the V.I.S. Alcohol Fact Sheets have been sourced from reliable government research, and are free to existing registered D&Wp V.I.S. Box customers.

WHAT ABOUT UNITS?

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Alcohol consumption is measured in units, with 1 unit equalling 8 grams of alcohol. It is recommended that men should not regularly drink more than 3 to 4 units each day and women are advised not to exceed 2 to 3. Regularly drinking more than these amounts can lead to many different serious health risks. However if you do exceed these limits it is recommend that you do not drink again for 48 hours.

A unit is calculated by the strength and size of the drink. A common mistake is 1 drink equals 1 unit, however this is not the case. Follow this simple calculation to check your consumption; multiply the Volume (in millilitres) by the Alcohol % then divide the result by 1000 = your Units

Formula:

$$\frac{\text{Volume (ml)} \times \%}{1000} = \text{Your Units}$$

Popular Drinks:

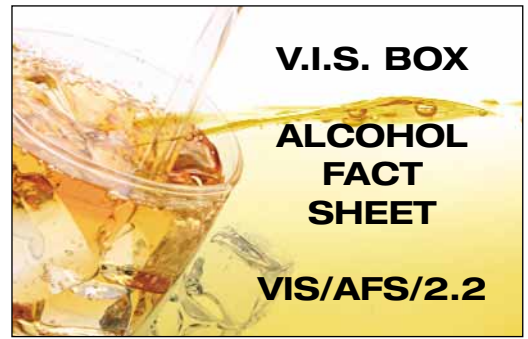
Half a pint of 3.5% beer = 1 unit

Small glass (125ml) of 9% wine = 1 unit

Single measure (25ml) of 40% spirit = 1 unit

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ALTERNATIVES: ALCOHOL FACT SHEET

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SHOULD I DRINK ALCOHOL?

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Research shows that people who start to drink alcohol at a young age are at greater risk of developing health problems later in life than those who start to drink older. However there is also research that shows responsible drinking from an early age and under parental supervision is more likely to result in responsible drinking as an adult.

Inexperienced drinkers will not know how to cope with the side effects of alcohol making them more vulnerable to accidents and injuries. Also they are unlikely to know their limits, which could result in alcohol poisoning.

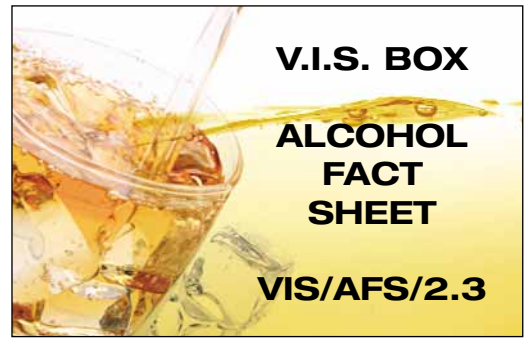
Remember it is illegal for persons under the age of 18 to buy alcohol and it is illegal

for adults to buy it on their behalf. Police can confiscate alcohol from under 18s drinking in a public space.



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ALTERNATIVES: ALCOHOL FACT SHEET

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CHILDREN & ALCOHOL

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Children are aware of alcohol from an early age so it is important to inform them so they can make positive and responsible decisions in the future.

At the ages of 8 to 11 some children have a slip of alcohol for the first time, usually on a special occasion. Remember it is illegal to give alcohol to a child under five. Obviously keep alcohol in a safe place and be there to supervise. If the child is mature enough you could explain the effects of drinking too much.

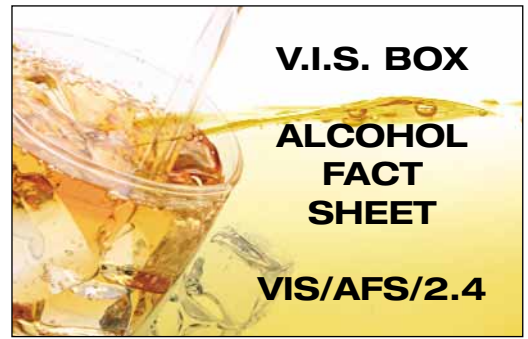
Between the ages of 12 to 14 some children may start drinking at parties. This is an important age to fully explain the effects of alcohol and the dangers that can

be involved. This is often the age parents first learn a child has been drinking without permission. If this happens to you; stay calm and listen. Try to understand why it happened and find a way to avoid it happening again.

Teenagers between 15 and 17 tend to spend a lot of time going out with friends. This is the age some teenagers start to drink regularly. Young adults, who are the age group most likely to binge drink, heavily influence teenagers. Make sure you know where they are and who they're with but also why you need to know - because you care for their future, health and safety.

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DRINKING AS I GET OLDER

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It is important to reassess your drinking as you get older as the body's ability to process alcohol decreases with age. This is because water content of the body decreases resulting in a higher concentration of alcohol in the blood. This is especially dangerous as alcohol causes a lack of co-ordination, which could result in serious injuries.

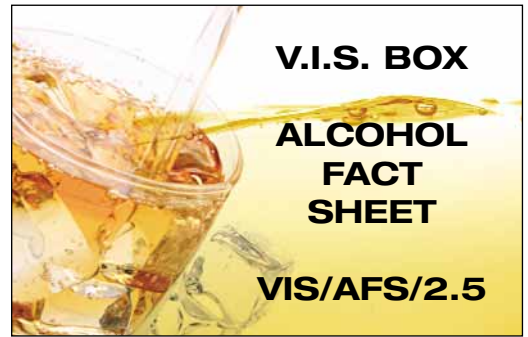
Drinking alcohol while taking medication can, at best, reduce the positive effects of the medication or, at worst, cause serious harm. Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before drinking while on prescribed medication.

1 or 2 units of any alcohol per day has been shown to help lower cholesterol and helps prevent heart disease in men over 40 and in post-menopausal women. Although regular exercise and improved diet is a healthier and more effective way of achieving these results.



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MEDICATION & ALCOHOL

MEDICATION & ALCOHOL

If you are on medication you must read its label and leaflets to check if it is safe to combine with alcohol, this includes all over the counter medicines, prescribed and herbal medicines. Pay extra attention to medication that sedates you, as they can be dangerous when mixed with alcohol. It is advised you do not drink if you are on the following types of medication:

Antibiotics

These are used to treat infectious diseases and when taken with alcohol can result in nausea, vomiting, headaches and convulsions.

Anticoagulants

When taken with alcohol there is an increased risk of haemorrhaging as anticoagulants affect the blood's ability to clot.

Antidepressants

Alcohol will increase the sedative effect of antidepressants. This will greatly affect the brain's function; making simple tasks such as driving dangerous. It will also make you feel tired and can even increase the body's blood pressure to dangerous levels.

Antihistamines

Available without prescription and used to treat allergic symptoms and insomnia, when mixed with alcohol, antihistamines will induce sleepiness and dizziness.

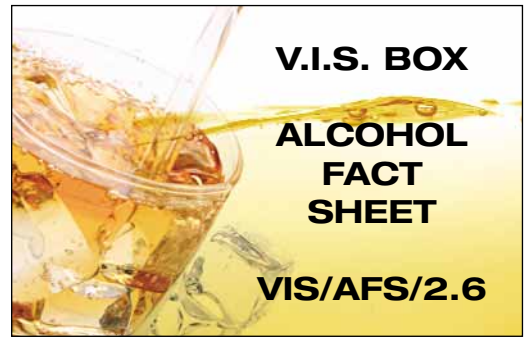
Anti-psychotic Medications

Increased sleepiness and impaired coordination will result from mixing anti-psychotic medication and alcohol. There is also the risk of death from extreme breathing difficulties.

Continued on 2.6

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RESOURCE SHEET: VIS/AFS/2.6

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MEDICATION & ALCOHOL

Anti-seizure Medications

Used to treat conditions such as epilepsy, when mixed with alcohol, their therapeutic effect against seizures is greatly reduced.

Cardiovascular Medications

These are used to treat heart and circulatory system problems i.e. angina or high blood pressure. When combined with alcohol, users may suffer dizziness or fainting. Also the effectiveness of the medicine may be reduced.

Narcotic Pain Relievers

Alcohol will increase the sedative effect of narcotic pain relievers because they contain opiates used to moderate severe pain.

Non-narcotic Pain Relievers

Available without prescription, when combined with alcohol, can cause damage to the stomach lining and bleeding. Also some, such as aspirin, will increase the effects of alcohol.

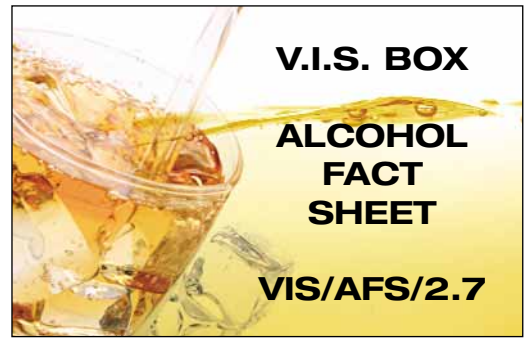
Sedatives and Hypnotics (Sleeping Pills)

These, such as Valium, should never be combined with alcohol, as they will result in severe drowsiness.

This is just a brief list for reference; there are many more medicines that should not be taken with alcohol. If you want to drink alcohol and have been prescribed medicines or medication you must check the risks with your doctor or pharmacist first.

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DRINKING & MENTAL HEALTH

DRINKING & MENTAL HEALTH

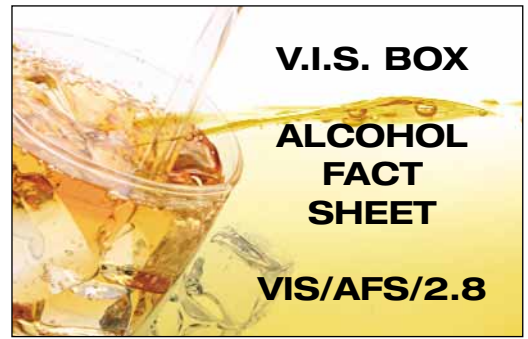
Excessive drinking by people with mental health problems can make these problems worse. Symptoms of depression and anxiety can increase, even though it appears to offer relief at first. This can result in alcohol dependency. At worst being drunk while suffering from depression can increase the risk of self-harm and suicide.

Before drinking always seek medical advice from your doctor if you have to take medication to treat any type of mental illness, as alcohol may reduce the effectiveness of the medication or even cause an adverse reaction.



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ALCOHOL & SPORTS

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Alcohol will have a negative affect on your physical performance in a number of ways. This is true even if it has been 24 hours or more since you last consumed alcohol.

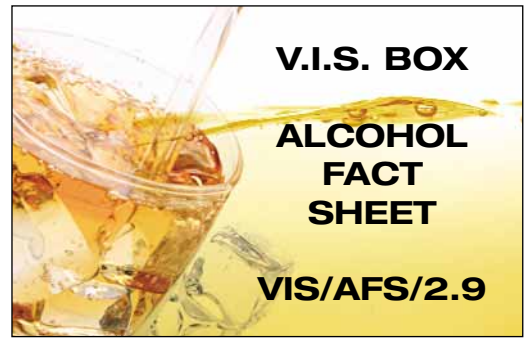
You will notice your endurance capacity decrease as the liver produces less sugar, which is vital in producing the energy for sport. Also alcohol's effect on the nervous system slows down the body's ability to process information. You will notice your reaction times slow down and accuracy decrease, as you become unbalanced and suffer from a lack of co-ordination.

Injuries are common in sports, however you can increase your chances of a

speedy recovery by avoiding alcohol. Alcohol increases both the swelling and bleeding of injured soft tissue and can mask the pain of a recent injury, making it hard to recognise and treat. Muscle cramps are caused as muscles burn sugar, producing lactic acid. Any alcohol in the body will add to this lactic acid and increase the chances of suffering from muscle fatigue and cramp.

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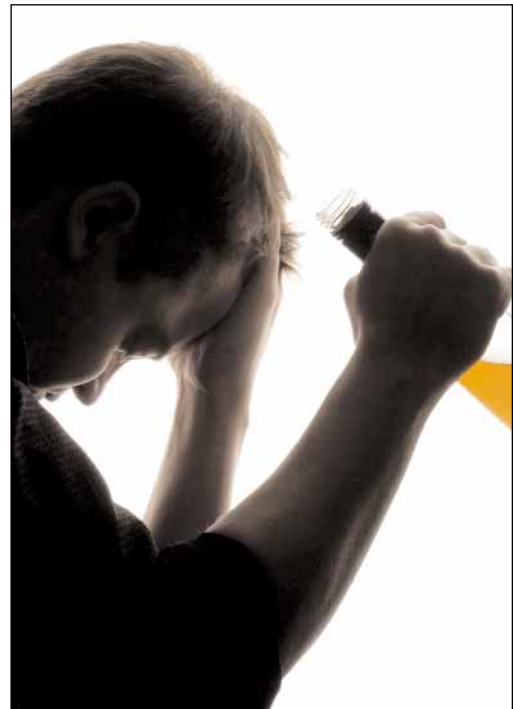
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DRINKING ALONE

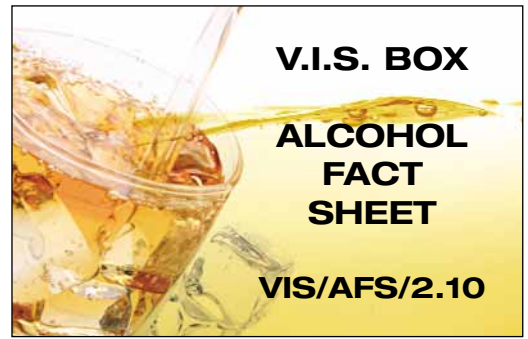
DRINKING ALONE

Many people live alone these days due to choice. However some people find themselves alone due to the break-up of a relationship or bereavement. In these cases it is important to monitor your drinking carefully. Drinking to help make you feel better when you feel lonely or depressed can increase the risk of alcohol dependency. If you are finding it hard to cope speak to your doctor who can advise you.



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PEER PRESSURE

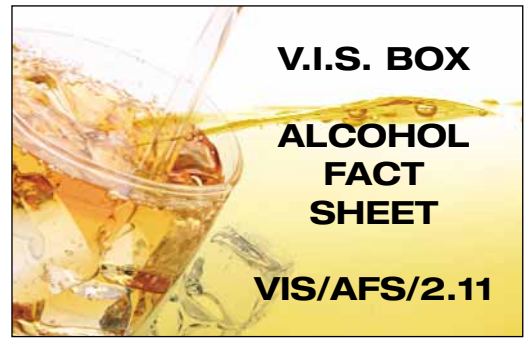
PEER PRESSURE

There are lots of reasons why you may choose not to drink alcohol; these might be personal, cultural or religious. Also there are as many benefits to choosing not to drink; good health being the most obvious one. Friends and family should support your decision and you should never feel pressured to drink. Although remember that if you drink occasionally, have a healthy diet, get regular exercise and do not smoke you stand a good chance of a long, healthy life.



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DRINKING & DIABETES

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Alcohol can reduce the body's blood glucose levels. If you have controlled diabetes, drinking a sensible amount of alcohol shouldn't affect your blood glucose. Drinking over recommended guidelines however can result in serious hypoglycaemia (a pathologic state produced by a lower than normal level of glucose) especially if you have insulin injections.

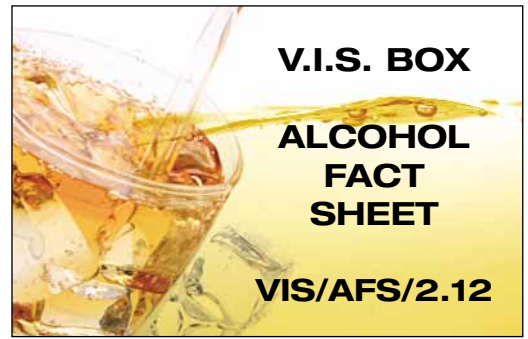
Remember hypoglycaemia can take up to 16 hours to affect you after heavy drinking, so keep your blood glucose level with carbohydrate. Make sure to eat carbohydrates before and after you sleep and monitor it closely the following day.

It is advised that suffers of diabetes should never drink on an empty stomach and it is best to drink during a meal or shortly before or after. You should never substitute alcoholic drinks for your usual meal or snacks.



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RESOURCE SHEET: VIS/AFS/2.12

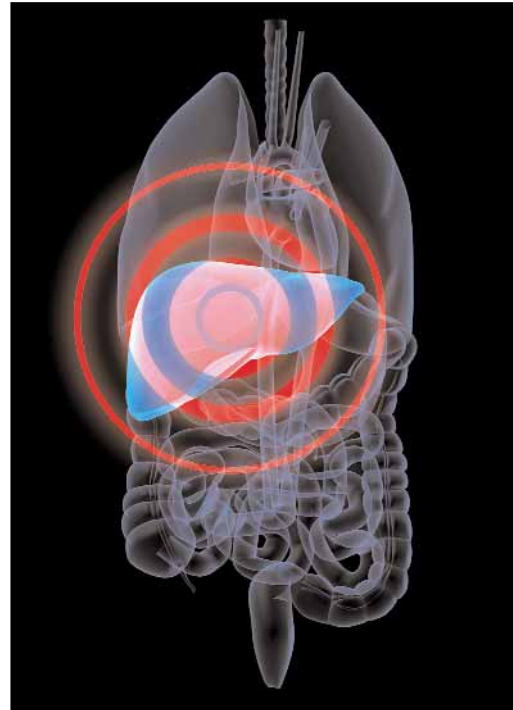
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LIVER DISEASE

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Excessive consumption of alcohol can cause liver disease, as well as harming many other organs. This damage to the liver is called cirrhosis; when the healthy liver tissue becomes increasingly replaced by scar tissue. If you have liver disease caused by excessive alcohol consumption or hepatitis B or C it is advised you do not drink at all. However if you suffer from a mild liver disease there is little evidence that drinking within the recommended guidelines will cause the condition to worsen, although caution is advised. Remember if, for any reason, you are unsure whether you should drink, talk to your doctor before you do.



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