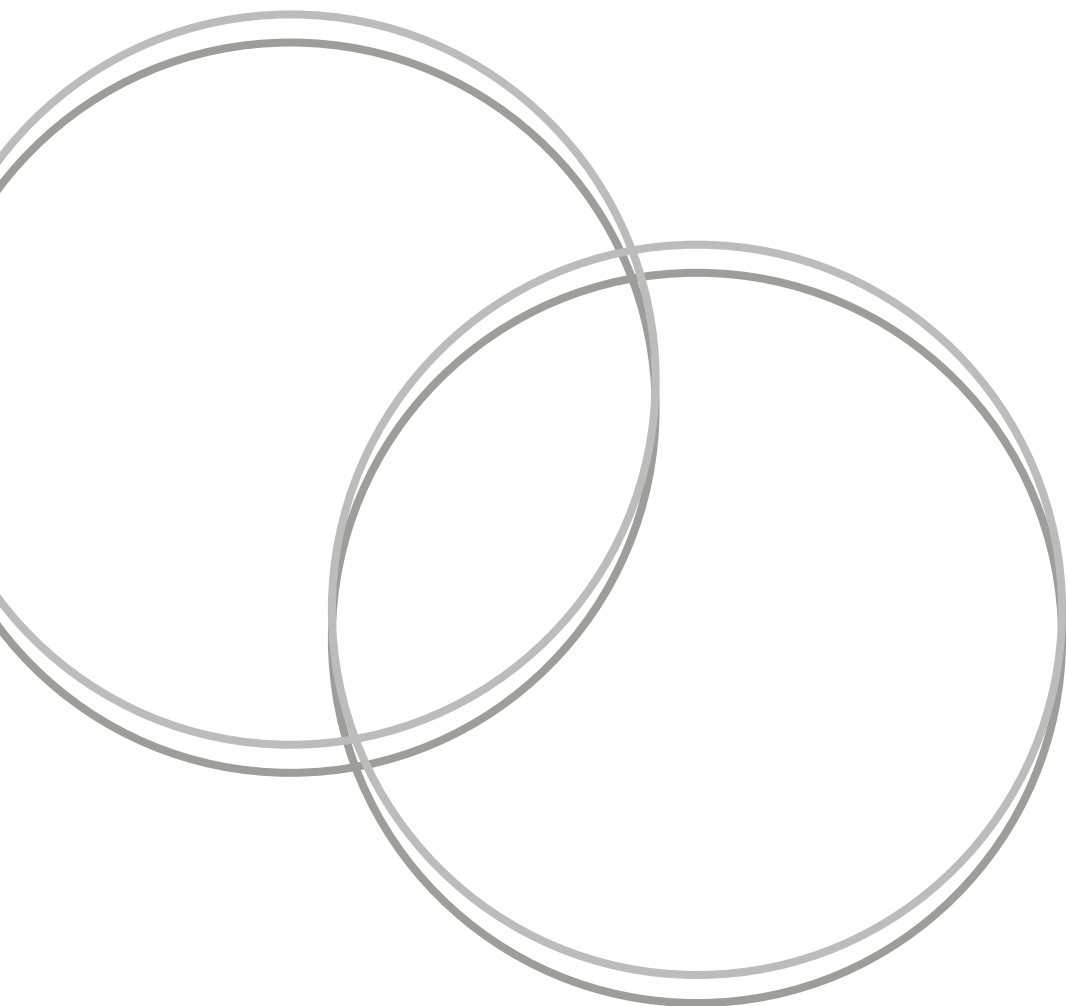




Oxford University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Alcohol awareness and harm reduction

Information for patients



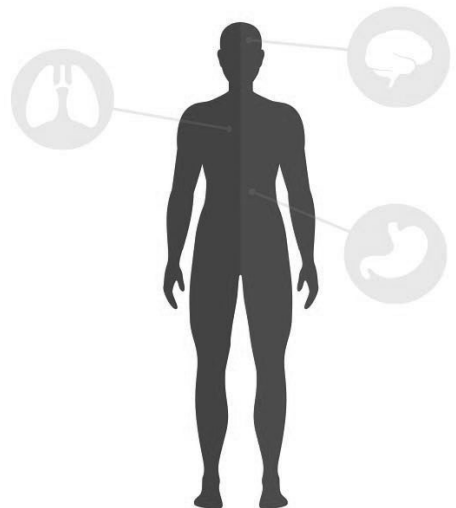
## How does alcohol affect you?

Alcohol affects your body's responses, slowing down your brain and putting you at higher risk of accidents. Alcohol...

- slows down your reactions
- disrupts coordination and balance
- impairs concentration, vision and hearing
- affects judgement and reasoning.

## Reasons for cutting down on alcohol:

- alcohol can cause 7 types of cancer
- better sleep
- more energy
- more money
- long term health benefits
- improved concentration
- glowing complexion
- slimmer waist line
- happier stomach.



## **If you drink dependently and want to cut down your alcohol intake:**

- **DON'T JUST STOP.** Alcohol withdrawal can be fatal.
- Talk to your GP/Alcohol services for support.
- Make a plan and set achievable limits.
- Create a drink diary.
- Make your intentions known to friends and family.
- Alternate between soft drinks and alcoholic drinks.
- Work towards alcohol free days.
- Try low alcohol drinks and single measures of spirits.
- Engage in a hobby/activity to distract from alcohol use and help avoid temptation.
- Give yourself rewards.

## **If you have been detoxed in hospital:**

You're doing really well. Your body is now free from the physical addiction, however there is still work to be done!

- Avoid keeping alcohol in your home environment.
- Avoid drinking alcohol free beer and wine.
- Engage in a hobby/activity like walking, swimming, cooking as a distraction. Keep active & busy.
- Join a support group.
- Until you feel confident, avoid socialising with friends who drink alcohol, going to bars and pubs.

## Withdrawal symptoms spotter guide:

- nausea and vomiting
- headache
- sensitivity to bright lights/hallucinations
- increased anxiety
- agitation
- confusion
- tremor
- sweating
- numbness/itching or crawling skin
- amplified noises.

## Responsible drinking:

- Don't drink on an empty stomach.
- Drink soft drinks in between alcoholic drinks.
- Don't feel pressured into drinking by other people.  
**Its ok to say NO**
- Avoid buying drinks in rounds.
- Avoid drinking and taking drugs.
- Stick to one type of drink.
- On nights out look out for each other, stick together.  
Let your friends know when you get home safely
- **DO NOT DRINK & DRIVE, OPERATE MACHINERY**  
or **SWIM.**
- The effects of alcohol can still affect your judgement  
and performance the next day.



## Alcohol when it's cold

Alcohol makes you feel warm, but the reality is very different!

The body sends blood to vessels close to the skin, taking it away from major organs. You may feel hot but your core temperature has dropped.

Dress appropriately for cold weather & know how you will be getting home or you may put yourself at risk of **hypothermia**.

## Alcohol when it's hot

Alcohol makes the kidneys work faster so you have to pee more frequently. It also causes the body to sweat more.

Increase in peeing + heat sweats + alcohol sweats  
= **dehydration**.

**DRINK MORE WATER AND STAY HYDRATED.**

Avoid swimming when you have been drinking alcohol.

**DON'T DRINK AND DIVE.** Alcohol consumption is known to increase the risk of drowning.

## Know your units!

The Chief Medical Officers guidelines recommend you should not regularly drink over **14 units of alcohol** a week.

That's 6 pints of regular beer a week, or approximately 1.5 bottles of wine.

For more information please visit:

[www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/calculating-alcohol-units](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/calculating-alcohol-units)

## **Contact us:**

### **Alcohol Care Team**

07770647741

Monday to Friday between 8am and 4pm.

The answerphone is checked daily (Monday to Friday).

## **Support services:**

### **Turning Point**

Drug & Alcohol Recovery Service in Oxfordshire.

01865 261690

[Oxfordshire@turning-point.co.uk](mailto:Oxfordshire@turning-point.co.uk)

[www.turning-point.co.uk/oxfordshire-roads-to-recovery](http://www.turning-point.co.uk/oxfordshire-roads-to-recovery)

### **Alcoholics Anonymous**

08009177650

[help@aamail.org](mailto:help@aamail.org)

[www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)

### **Samaritans**

Free phone 116 123

Open 24 hours a day 365 days a week

### **Talking Space**

Offers a free range of talking therapies.

Self referrals made via the online referral form or phone line.

01865 901222

[www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/talkingspaceplus](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/talkingspaceplus)

### **Oxfordshire Mind**

01865247788

[www.oxfordshiremind.org.uk/help](http://www.oxfordshiremind.org.uk/help)

### **Al-Anon Family Group**

Support for people affected by someone else's drinking.

0207 4030888

[www.al-anonuk.org.uk/](http://www.al-anonuk.org.uk/)

### **Oxfordshire Here4YOUth**

Support for young people age affected by familial substance misuse or who use drugs & alcohol.

01865590825

[here4youthox@cranstoun.org.uk](mailto:here4youthox@cranstoun.org.uk)

### **Drink Aware**

Useful information and tips. You can also speak to their Drink chat advisor.

[www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk)

### **Alcohol Change**

[www.alcoholchange.org.uk](http://www.alcoholchange.org.uk)

## Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Author: Kitty Norris  
March 2026  
Review: March 2029  
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
[www.ouh.nhs.uk/information](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/information)



*Making a difference across our hospitals*

[charity@ouh.nhs.uk](mailto:charity@ouh.nhs.uk) | 01865 743 444 | [hospitalcharity.co.uk](http://hospitalcharity.co.uk)

OXFORD HOSPITALS CHARITY (REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1175809)

