



# Alcohol. How much is too much?

**W**e all like to relax and have a good time. For many people, alcohol is part of this process. After all, it is part of our culture and Australia's most widely used drug.

However, if it is not used wisely, alcohol can have many unwanted effects.

"This doesn't apply to me," you may be saying, "only alcoholics have problems with the amount they drink, right?" Wrong!

Five per cent of people in Australia are dependent on alcohol. However, 11% of women and 17% of men drink alcohol to the extent that causes them physical and/or psychological harm. Or, it can place them at risk of such harm.

Drinking too much alcohol might cause problems in all areas of your life:

- social
- psychological
- physical
- financial

For example, you may be having:

- *fights with family or friends;*
- *difficulty concentrating and performing at work;*
- *accidents;*
- *trouble sleeping;*
- *problems with your sexual relationships.*

All this may occur even before alcohol goes on to cause permanent damage to many parts of your body.

Many people who drink heavily do not become alcoholics. They can change their drinking habits and reduce the risk of harm to themselves and their families.

### So how much is too much?

Not all drinks contain the same amount of alcohol. You can work out how much alcohol you are drink-

ing if you know what a standard drink is.

### What is a standard drink?

A standard drink is equal to about 10 grams of pure alcohol (see diagram). Not all drinks served in hotels and restaurants are in standard drink glasses.

Health authorities recommend that men have no more than four standard drinks a day, and women no more than two standard drinks a day. It is safest for women who are pregnant, or trying to become pregnant, not to drink alcohol at all. Everyone should have at least two alcohol free days a week.

If you are drinking more than the recommended levels, talk to your doctor about how this may be affecting you and how you can cut down on your drinking. You're not the only one having problems. You've already taken the first step by finding out how much is too much.

*These common servings of alcoholic drinks all contain about the same amount of alcohol — 10 g*

Superlight Beer	Light Beer	Ordinary Beer	Table Wine	Fortified Wine (Port/Sherry)	Spirits
5 middies (0.9% alcohol)	2 middies (2-3% alcohol)	1 middy/ 285 mL (4-5% alcohol)	1 glass/ 100 mL (12% alcohol)	1 small glass/ 60 mL (20% alcohol)	1 nip/ 30 mL (40% alcohol)

**MEN**  
No more than  
**4** standard  
drinks per day

**WOMEN**  
No more than  
**2** standard  
drinks per day



**LOW RISK DRINKING**

BETTER  
HEALTH THROUGH  
UNDERSTANDING