



British Heart
Foundation

HEALTH AT WORK
**ALCOHOL
AWARENESS**



**FIGHT
FOR EVERY
HEARTBEAT**

bhf.org.uk

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I INTRODUCTION

Welcome to your guide to promoting alcohol awareness in your workplace. Keeping within the lower risk guidelines is a healthier way to include alcohol in your diet. Drinking too much can increase your risk of heart disease which is bad for health and bad for business.

How to use this toolkit

This is booklet 6 of your *Health at Work toolkit*.

The complete toolkit covers:

- Launch a successful programme (booklet 1)
- Physical activity (booklet 2)
- Healthy eating (booklet 3)
- Mental wellbeing (booklet 4)
- Stopping smoking (booklet 5)
- Alcohol awareness (booklet 6).

In this booklet we provide lots of ideas and suggestions for getting your programme started – and keeping up the momentum.

Who this toolkit is for

This toolkit is for employers and staff responsible for organising health initiatives in their workplace. It can be used in all sizes and types of organisation: small, medium or large; public or private sector; single-site or multi-site.

What this toolkit helps you do

This toolkit aims to give you all the ideas, tools and advice you need to organise successful Health at Work initiatives. By 'Health at Work initiative' we mean anything that provides a useful source of information, or a chance for employees to become healthier. That includes making a change to the workplace to promote a healthier lifestyle and improve business outcomes.

Get more support online

Where you see a weblink, it means you can download extra information from the BHF Health at Work website bhf.org.uk/healthatwork

2 WHY IT MATTERS

It matters to have a workforce that is looking after its health. Excessive alcohol is a leading risk factor for ill-health and premature death, affecting businesses, families, and individual employees¹.

It matters to create a culture in the workplace that supports employees to have a healthy lifestyle and makes drinking within the limits part of healthy choices. There is no absolute safe level of alcohol and in some situations it's never advisable to drink alcohol, for example if driving or operating machinery. This is because even small amounts of alcohol can affect reaction times, perception and control.

How much is too much?

Increased risk to health begins to occur when drinking above recommended guidelines. Social or moderate drinking can become problem drinking when:

- The impact of drinking leads to time off work due to hangovers or feeling unwell in the morning.
- Drinking leads to poor sleep and this affects performance at work.
- Drinking affects the ability to carry out expected duties at home.
- Drinking is used to manage unwanted feelings or thoughts.

Men and Women

UK drinking guidelines for **both men and women** suggest **there is no safe level of alcohol consumption**. National guidelines are **not to drink regularly more than 14 units per week** to keep health risks from drinking alcohol to a low level, and that it is best to **spread this evenly over 3 days** or more.

Both men and women should **aim for at least two alcohol-free days** each week.

See Page 7 for information on the number of units in common drinks.

Why it matters for employers

If you help your staff to drink responsibly, your whole business benefits from:

- improved health of employees
- improved productivity
- reduced absenteeism
- reduced workplace accidents and injuries
- increased staff loyalty
- improved working environment and corporate public image
- contribution to corporate social responsibility.

The Government has estimated that up to **17 million working days** per year are **lost to absenteeism** due to alcohol misuse, in addition, it's estimated that **40% of accidents at work involve or related to alcohol use²**.



Why it matters for employees

- Staff are more likely to drink within the recommended guidelines, reducing the likelihood of alcohol related absence, accidents and under-performance.
- Improved health and wellbeing.
- Staff with concerns about their own drinking will have awareness of how to access support, increasing job security.
- Staff will have confidence in the company alcohol policy, that there are clear rules around drinking and that managers lead by example.
- Staff will be happier, healthier and more engaged.
- Managers who have concerns about someone else's drinking will find it easier to raise the issue.
- Staff will feel more included if their needs have been considered and social norms challenged by developing an alcohol policy that recognises diversity and the need for inclusion.

3 GETTING STARTED

Lots of people aren't sure about alcohol units. If you can help your colleagues understand how many units are in their drinks, and explain the risks, they can make informed choices about their alcohol consumption.

What is a unit of alcohol?

Although 90% of people have heard of alcohol units, working out how many are in your drink can still be difficult. Many drinkers can't correctly say how many units are in their glass³. It's therefore unsurprising that people often drink more than they realise.

The number of units in each drink depends on the size of the drink (the volume) and the strength (the percentage alcohol by volume or ABV). The higher the percentage strength of a drink and the larger the volume, the higher the total number of units will be.

$$\text{Units of alcohol} = \frac{\text{Volume (ml)} \times \text{ABV (\%)}}{1000}$$

For example:

*A 330ml can of beer of 5% ABV =
330x5/1000=1.7 units of alcohol*

One in five adults are teetotal, but one in six adults report binge drinking in a typical week.

Health impacts

The more you drink over the limit, the greater the risk of ill health. Any reduction in regular consumption will reduce risk even if the reduction isn't to within 14 units per week⁴.

When drinking over the recommended guidelines:

- Men are up to 2.5 times, and women are up to 1.7 times more likely to get mouth, neck and throat cancer.
- Women are 20% more likely to get breast cancer.

These common drinks show you how many units are in each drink:

<p>1.5 units</p> 	<p>2.1 units</p> 	<p>3 units</p> 
<p>Small glass red / white / rose wine (125ml, ABV 12%)</p>	<p>Standard glass red / white / rose wine (175ml, ABV 12%)</p>	<p>Large glass red / white / rose wine (250ml, ABV 12%)</p>
<p>2 units</p> 	<p>3 units</p> 	<p>1.7 units</p> 
<p>Pint of lower strength lager / beer / cider (ABV 3.6%)</p>	<p>Pint of higher strength lager / beer / cider (ABV 5.2%)</p>	<p>Bottle of lager / beer / cider (330ml, ABV 5%)</p>
<p>2 units</p> 	<p>1.5 units</p> 	<p>1 unit</p> 
<p>Can of lager / beer / cider (440ml, ABV 4.5%)</p>	<p>Alcopop (275ml, ABV 5.5%)</p>	<p>Single small shot of spirits (25ml, ABV 40%)</p>

Calories in alcohol

Did you know that a glass of wine can have the same amount of calories as four cookies? How about a pint of lager – surprised to hear it's often the calorific equivalent of a slice of pizza?

Being high in sugar means alcohol contains lots of calories – seven calories a gram in fact, almost as many as pure fat!

Calories from alcohol are 'empty calories'; they have no nutritional value. Most alcoholic drinks contain traces of vitamins and minerals, but not usually in amounts that make any significant contribution to our health.

By cutting back on the amount you drink, it can significantly help to reduce your calorie intake. It can be useful to know that some alcoholic brands now have 'light' low alcohol alternatives containing less calories. Another way to drink less calories is to opt for a low calorie mixer such as a diet cola or soda. Drinking water or low calorie soft drinks between alcoholic drinks is not only a good way to reduce your calorie intake but also helps to reduce the amount of units you're drinking. It also helps you to stay hydrated; The European Food Safety Authority recommends that women should drink about 1.6 litres of fluid and men should drink about 2.0 litres of fluid per day.



4 YOUR ALCOHOL AWARE WORKPLACE

Creating an alcohol at work policy and raising awareness around alcohol will help build a healthier culture at work.

Doing this will require support from all managers, a team of champions and a greater organisational awareness of how to deal with alcohol issues.

Building a support team

You may have a Health at Work team who can also look at alcohol in the workplace, or you may set up a sub-team to look at this separately. Smaller businesses might want to have a rep who looks at this as part of their wider role.

The aim of the team is to:

1. Assess the needs of the organisation, in relation to what's currently available
2. Plan the strategy and timetable for running the initiative and engaging staff
3. Evaluate the campaign and plan ongoing work around alcohol awareness

Your Health at Work team or Alcohol support sub-team should:



Planning your initiative

The planning stage should consider:

- how often the team will meet
- how to launch and communicate the initiative in an engaging and imaginative way
- the timing, funding and other resources to be allocated alongside an action plan
- how to build evaluation and performance indicators into the programme.

Creating an alcohol policy

An alcohol policy should include:

- the company's expectations with regard to staff reporting to work fit for duty
- the rules around drinking alcohol while both on or pre-duty (including while at corporate events or entertaining clients)
- the procedures the company will take if employees are found to be in breach of the policy
- the support that will be provided to staff who are alcohol dependent
- clarify your corporate values and culture relating to alcohol consumption.

Awareness raising approaches

Your initiative should aim to increase awareness about alcohol-related ill-health, the risks related to alcohol and the workplace, and how self awareness of drinking levels can lead to improved health and productivity. Regular awareness-raising can be in the form of interactive sessions with staff, training for managers, posters, flyers and online tools and links. Having permanent, visible communications reinforces the company's position on alcohol as well as protecting the company in relation to potential disciplinary action.

Interactive sessions with staff could include demonstrations and information about what a unit of alcohol is, how drinking alcohol impairs judgment, you could use a pair of 'Beer Goggles' to make sessions interactive and fun and talk about the health impacts of drinking too much.

Other activities you could run include alcohol quizzes and/or "pour your own home drink" and work out how many units someone is consuming.

BHF resources you can download or order include – *10 minutes to change your life*; *Call time on alcohol* and *Eating well*; *Healthy eating for your heart*.

Other resources can be found at Change4Life and NHS Choices.

Online information to share with employees:

- Alcohol self-assessment – nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Alcoholcalculator.aspx
- Alcohol myth buster – nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/alcohol-myths.aspx
- Alcohol support – nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Tipsoncuttingdown.aspx
- Handy tools – drinksmarter.org/handy-tools

See page 17 for more useful links. NHS Choices have some great tips to reduce alcohol intake for those who know that they drink over the recommended amount. Visit nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Tipsoncuttingdown.aspx

Training for managers should include information about the impact of drinking too much alcohol, how to recognise and assess the signs and symptoms of heavy drinking, and the referral procedure for when they need to act and let relevant colleagues know when there is a problem with a member of staff.

For training, see the Alcohol Health Network – alcoholhealthnetwork.org.uk



Case study: Transport for London

“A service like this is expensive to run but safety is crucial and in the long term it’s really cost effective. We’ve saved money by reducing the issues that come with alcohol problems such as poor attendance and performance, as well as reducing the cost of training new staff.

The programme has a great impact with staff members, who say it has changed their whole lives, not just the time they spend at work.

At Transport for London the safety of our customers and staff is paramount, which means the safety of the duties our staff perform is vital. In order to prevent accidents and combat alcohol problems amongst our staff we offer a comprehensive alcohol service which encourages affected staff to come forward and seek help immediately and in return they are protected from disciplinary action. We raise awareness about this at staff inductions and by communicating about it throughout the year.

Once a staff member seeks help, we offer an initial assessment as well as liver function tests to assess the damage to their health. Employees will then sign-up to a three week assessment and support process during which time they don’t work but still get paid. Over this time they attend three days each week and are assessed in groups by qualified counsellors specialised in addiction. Everything is done as a group to encourage peer support.

At the end of the three week period we make a treatment plan going forward. This can mean going back to work or can involve formal treatment. Whenever they return to work they go back on a ‘monitoring certificate’ which means they’re regularly alcohol tested for six months. If they receive formal treatment they also attend a weekly support group for six months when they return to work.”

If a colleague is drinking too much and putting their health at risk

There is good evidence that asking individuals specific questions on their drinking levels and giving them personalised advice is effective in identifying those who are drinking too much and in reducing drinking to lower levels. This brief intervention can be effective but needs to be done sensitively and with high levels of confidentiality. A good example of a tool you could use is called AUDIT, Alcohol Use Disorders Identifications Test⁵, which identifies staff at risk of alcohol related harm. This tool can be used by you or someone in your HR or Occupational Health department – you don't need to be a health care professional to use it effectively.

Using AUDIT, individuals are asked up to ten standardised questions and given five to ten minutes of feedback on their score, and advice on future action. The AUDIT measures alcohol-related risk out of a total of 40.

AUDIT – What the scores tell us:

- 0-8 – Lower risk drinking
- 8-15 – Increasing risk drinking
- 16-19 – Higher risk drinking
- 20+ – Higher risk drinking and possibly dependent.

Typical health advice following the AUDIT questions would be:

- what their score means for their health
- what further risks could occur if they continued to drink at the same level
- information about recommended guidelines and the benefits of adhering to these
- where to go for further advice and information.

This is all information that you can find in this booklet or via the links that we have highlighted throughout. It is essential that clear referral pathways are in place for further advice, support and counselling if required.

If you don't feel comfortable using the AUDIT tool than why not signpost colleagues to a self-assessment instead. Visit: nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Alcoholcalculator.aspx?Tag=Alcohol

5 IDEAS FOR EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

People will be more likely to get involved with some organised events and activities that can educate informally and create a real buzz.

Mocktail Bar Shake Off

Get staff to bring in their best Mocktail Recipes and hold a Shake Off – everyone makes their favourite non-alcoholic drink and someone judges the best.

Why not try a ‘Mock-ito’ to get the Shake Off started: mix 6 mint leaves, 25ml lemon juice and 1ml agave syrup, and top-up with Ginger ale.

Go Dry for a Good Cause

Staff can ‘go dry’ for a month and run, swim or cycle on one evening of the week instead of going to the pub, to raise money for a good cause. An evening of sport can also bring people together as a reminder that there are ways to socialise other than going to the pub.

Visit [bhf.org.uk/events](https://www.bhf.org.uk/events) for sponsored activity events.

Drink Tracker Week

Simply track your drinking over the week using a Drink Diary – staff may be surprised how much they’ve drunk. You can find a Drink Diary in 10 minutes to change your life: Call time on alcohol booklet.

Was it more or less than the recommended guidelines? When did they drink the most and why? Employees can also download an app to track their drinking here: [nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Alcoholtracker.aspx](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Alcoholtracker.aspx)

Hold a stall and / or invite a professional

Your local council can put you in touch with substance-misuse health professionals that can come to your workplace and hold a stall to promote safer drinking. Alternatively why not order in resources and create a stall of your own, include leaflets, factsheets, and small gifts with safe drinking messages. For low cost / free resources and products to see resources.drinkaware.co.uk

Alcohol Quiz

Use quizzes and factsheets to educate employees in a fun and interactive way.

To download our factsheets and quizzes please visit bhf.org.uk/alcoholatwork

National and local initiatives

It can be useful to link your alcohol awareness initiative to local, regional or national events – for example, **Alcohol Awareness Week** usually occurs in the third week of November every year, Dry January runs through the whole of that month. Find out more at dryjanuary.org.uk



6 SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

As well as all the information in this toolkit, there is plenty of other support out there. It's all free and designed specially for you, so make sure you take advantage of it.

Health at Work website

You'll find all sorts of up-to-date information on running your Health at Work programme on our website bhf.org.uk/healthatwork, as well as a range of resources to download. Many of our publications are available to order online.

Success stories

Our site includes some brilliant success stories from other organisations – the perfect way to get ideas and inspiration. You can use the search engine to find a case study similar to your own organisation and health initiatives. Some stories are in written form, while others are in the form of short films. Either way, it's a really useful source of information. Visit bhf.org.uk/successstories

BHF LinkedIn group

Our Health at Work LinkedIn community is for anyone interested in Health at Work. You can discuss challenges, news stories and share experiences with other members. You'll find information about forthcoming events, as well as useful documents. To join, search BHF Health at Work on LinkedIn.

Health at Work training and events

The Health at Work website also includes information on our own Health at Work training and events, along with news, updates and a BHF events calendar. To see for yourself, visit bhf.org.uk/healthatwork

BHF Health at Work 020 7554 0355

Whenever you're facing a particular challenge in your Health at Work programme, it's good to know there's someone on the other end of the line.

Call our Health at Work experts to share what's on your mind. They'll be able to give advice and point you to useful resources.

Useful links

Alcohol Health Network

Provide specialist training, IBA sessions, alcohol campaign co-creation, bespoke online tools and policy advice.
alcoholhealthnetwork.org.uk

Health and Safety Executive 'Don't Mix It'

A guide for employers on alcohol at work.
hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg240.pdf

Drinkaware

drinkaware.co.uk

NHS choices

[nhs.uk/LiveWell/Alcohol/Pages/
Alcoholhome.aspx](http://nhs.uk/LiveWell/Alcohol/Pages/Alcoholhome.aspx)

Change 4 Life

[nhs.uk/change4life/Pages/cutting-down-
alcohol.aspx](http://nhs.uk/change4life/Pages/cutting-down-alcohol.aspx)

Drink smarter

drinksarter.org

Alcohol Concern / alcohol Awareness Week

[alcoholconcern.org.uk/campaign/
alcohol-awareness-week](http://alcoholconcern.org.uk/campaign/
alcohol-awareness-week)

BHF resources

- 10 minutes to change your life: Call time on alcohol
- Eating well: Healthy eating for your heart

To order or download your copies, visit bhf.org.uk/publications
Or call the BHF order line on 0870 600 6566 or email orderline@bhf.org.uk

References

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- ² Institute of Alcohol Studies, Alcohol in the workplace factsheet 2014.
- ³ HSCIC, Statistics on Alcohol, 2015.
- ⁴ Your Drinking and You, NHS Leaflet 2012 [Online]. Accessible at http://www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/supporter-resources/downloads/408723_Your_Drinking_And_You.pdf
- ⁵ Babor et al (2001) Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Tool Guidelines for use in Primary Care, World Health Organisation.



**British Heart
Foundation**

For over 50 years we've pioneered research that has transformed the lives of millions of people living with heart disease. Our work has been central to the discoveries of vital treatments that are changing the fight against heart disease.

But heart and circulatory disease still kills around one in four people in the UK, stealing them away from their families and loved ones.

From babies born with life threatening heart problems, to the many mums, dads and grandparents who survive a heart attack and endure the daily battles of heart failure.

Join our fight for every heartbeat in the UK. Every pound raised, minute of your time and donation to our shops will help make a difference to people's lives.

Text FIGHT to 70080 to donate £3*

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*This is a charity donation service for the BHF. Texts cost £3 + 1 standard rate msg.

The BHF will receive 100% of your donation to fund our life saving research.

To opt out of calls and SMS text NOCOMMS BHF to 70060, or if you have any questions about your gift call 02032827863.

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