



sedqa

Alcohol:

**never
and
not at all?**

Sedqa - Agency Against Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Department of Information, Valletta

1. The situation in Malta

A high percentage of the population drinks alcohol. In Malta, the implications of drinking are not taken seriously enough. The majority of adults who drink alcohol consume the specified number of units without causing harm to themselves and/or others. Yet, there is always a number who drink excessively, or in inappropriate environments, thus creating problems and putting themselves and others at risk. Young people, for whom alcohol is increasingly a role in their social life, are particularly at risk.

2. What is a UNIT of alcohol?

A unit is the amount of alcohol in one drink (approximately 8 grammes).



3. How does alcohol affect the body?

The main effect is on the brain where control centres are “knocked out” resulting in intoxication.

The body’s metabolic system (mainly the liver) burns up one unit of alcohol in approximately 1 hour.

Other physical effects include stomach ulcers, high blood pressure and heart diseases.

The faster alcohol is consumed, the quicker mental and physical control is lost.

4. How much can I drink before causing harm to my body?

People **under 18 years**: it is **not** advisable for them to consume alcohol.

People **under 21 years**: the less the better ... not more than two units on a single occasion.

Men **over 21 years**: not more than 21 units per week, over five or six days.

Women **over 21 years**: not more than 14 units per week, over five or six days.

Abstaining from alcohol for some days is always beneficial.

Drinking these amounts or even more than 4 units in one session may cause harm.

5. As a young person, can I drink alcohol without causing harm to myself?

It is **not** advisable for people under 18 years to consume alcohol.

People over 18 years of age can drink a limited amount of alcohol, but since the human body continues to develop physically up to 21 years of age, their tolerance for alcohol is lower than adults.

The amount of units of alcohol internationally considered safe is specific to adult consumption. There is no scientific evidence of acceptable amounts for young people.

6. Can everyone over 21 years drink alcohol within limits?

NO

People with certain conditions/circumstances should not drink alcohol since even the smallest amount can be harmful.

Pregnant women, or women who believe they may be pregnant.

Before driving or operating machinery.

In cases of alcohol dependency problems.

When under medication (it is always **best** to check with your doctor).

When advised by the doctor to refrain from consuming alcohol.

If you are feeling down.

If you are worried and anxious.

Women with a history of breast cancer in the family should not take more than an occasional drink.

7. If I notice that I am exceeding the limit, what should I do?

Reduce consumption!

Think before you drink and do not let yourself get carried away.

Drink non-alcoholic beer, soft drinks, water or juices instead of alcohol.

On no account should one drink more than 4 units of alcohol in one session.

On no account must one drink if driving.

Do not feel uncomfortable saying “No Thanks!” or “That’s Enough”.

Go out with friends who are not drinkers.

Avoid situations where alcohol is consumed at a higher rate than usual.

Consume beverages with a lower alcohol intake.

Never drink on an empty stomach.

8. If I exceed the limit of alcohol intake, does it mean that I have a drinking problem?

You do not necessarily have a drinking problem. However, bingeing* could be a health hazard, besides the legal consequences associated with breaking the law. This includes drinking and driving, endangering the safety of other and violating public morals. Furthermore, it does mean that you are putting yourself at risk of developing a drinking problem.

* Binge drinking means consuming more than 5 units in one session.

9. And if I find that I am still going over the limits?

Look for help. There are professionals who can assist you in any situation.

...so, must I stop drinking completely?

Not necessarily. It depends on the extent of the problem you have. Professional people can help you decide what is best for you.

For further information consult:
European Alcohol Action Plan 2000-2005



3, Braille Str., St. Venera HMR 11
website: www.sedqa.org.mt

Sedqa Alcohol Services
Dar Zerniq - 247630
Community Team - 421814
Freephone 24-hour Helpline 151