



# Alcohol

Alcohol is consumed by many Australians, and is part of the way many people socialise with family and friends. As part of a balanced lifestyle, alcohol consumption does not necessarily cause health problems. Although most people drink at low-risk levels, alcohol can have an extremely negative impact on the human body at unsafe drinking levels.

It is beneficial for all people to know about "standard drinks", and safe drinking guidelines for men and women. When considering what, and how much, an individual is going to drink, they are encouraged to read the labels on alcoholic bottles and cans. These labels help people make better decisions about their alcohol consumption.

## Standard Drinks

What is *perceived* as a standard drink, and what *actually* is a standard drink are usually quite different. It is worthwhile writing down your alcohol drinking patterns to understand how much you are actually drinking, then convert this into standard drinks, as shown below.

375ml Stubby Full Strength Beer	(4.9% Alc. Vol) = 1.5 Standard Drinks
375ml Stubby Mid Strength Beer	(3.5% Alc. Vol) = 1 Standard Drink
285ml Middy Full Strength Beer	(4.9% Alc. Vol) = 1 Standard Drink
30ml Spirit Nip	(40% Alc. Vol) = 1 Standard Drink
285ml Middy Mid Strength Beer	(3.5% Alc. Vol) = 0.7 Standard Drink
750ml Bottle Wine	(12% Alc. Vol) = 7 Standard Drinks
700ml Bottle Spirits	(40% Alc. Vol) = 22 Standard Drinks

## Daily Guidelines

On average females are encouraged to drink less than males. Women should drink no more than 2 standard drinks per day on average, and should refrain from consuming more than 4 standard drinks on any one occasion. 1–2 alcohol free days should be incorporated per week.

Males are suggested to drink no more than 4 standard drinks per day on average, with a total not exceeding 6 standard drinks on one occasion. They too, should ensure there are 1-2 alcohol free days per week.

If people drink more than the recommended amount, alcohol has a range of short and long term health effects. These include a negative impact on:

- ▶ The brain
- ▶ Stress levels
- ▶ Sleep patterns
- ▶ Sexual function

Long term high risk alcohol consumption can cause serious illness including:

- ▶ Cancer
- ▶ Cirrhosis of the liver
- ▶ Brain damage and memory loss
- ▶ Alcohol dependence

Drinking excessive alcohol can also lead people to choose more risky behaviours, which could result in injury and death.

People are encouraged to consume wisely and spread their drinks over extended periods of time. You should consider eating a meal before drinking, and men should have no more than 2 standard drinks in the first hour, followed by 1 per hour thereafter. Women are asked to have no more than 1 standard drink in the first and continuing hours.