



Published on *Go Ask Alice!* (<https://goaskalice.columbia.edu>)

[Home](#) > How much alcohol a day?

How much alcohol a day? ^[1]

Alice,

How much alcohol is too much to consume per day?

— Boundaries

Answer

Dear Boundaries,

What's "too much" alcohol for a person will vary, based on a number of factors. Thinking about the immediate effects of alcohol consumption, the extent to which alcohol impacts health and behavior is directly related to blood alcohol concentration (BAC). A person's BAC varies, depending on the amount of alcohol consumed and how quickly it's metabolized. Metabolism may be affected by such factors as body weight, amount of body fat, and sex. Females naturally have less of the enzyme necessary for alcohol to be broken down in the stomach, which causes more alcohol to go directly into the bloodstream before it is processed.

When alcohol is consumed, it passes from the stomach and intestines into the blood, a process called absorption. While all ingested alcohol is eventually absorbed, the rate of absorption is determined by factors including the amount of food in your system, the rate at which you consume alcohol, the type of drink, and other medications or drugs in your system. To prevent over-intoxication, a person needs to absorb less alcohol than they may metabolize. For most people, the liver metabolizes approximately one drink per hour. A drink is one to one and a half ounces of standard 80-proof liquor, twelve ounces of beer, or a five ounce glass of wine.

When thinking about alcohol use over the longer-term, guidelines for light to moderate drinking include limiting alcohol intake to one drink or less a day for women and two drinks or less per day for men. Health risks are more likely to increase as more alcohol is consumed. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism ^[2] (NIAAA), heavy drinking is considered four or more drinks a day or more than 14 drinks in a week for men and three drinks or more a day or more than seven drinks a week for women. Drinking heavily is associated with several health consequences including chronic diseases (cirrhosis, cancer, and high blood pressure), as well as unintentional injuries, violence, and alcohol abuse or dependence. If you'd like to explore your

drinking behaviors, you might be interested in speaking with a health educator or mental health professional to learn more.

Used in moderation, alcohol can be a part of celebrating and socializing. Knowing what qualifies as lower- and higher-risk drinking can help you make healthier choices. Cheers to that!

Alice!

Category:

[Alcohol & Other Drugs](#) [3]

[Alcohol](#) [4]

Related questions

[How can I help my drunk friend?](#) [5]

[When drinking the same amount of alcohol, are you more intoxicated in the air than on the ground?](#) [6]

[Suddenly, drinking alcohol makes me sick!](#) [7]

[Better to drink one a day or many at one time?](#) [8]

Resources

[Counseling and Psychological Services \(CPS\) \(Morningside\)](#) [9]

[Columbia Health BASICS program \(Morningside\)](#) [10]

[Mental Health Services \(CUIMC\)](#) [11]

[Student Health Service BASICS program \(CUIMC\)](#) [12]

[Addiction Information & Management Strategies \(AIMS\) \(CUIMC\)](#) [13]

Published date:

Apr 09, 1995

Last reviewed on:

Jul 26, 2015

Footer menu

- ▼ [Contact Alice!](#)
 - [Content Use](#)
 - [Media Inquiries](#)
 - [Comments & Corrections](#)
- ▼ [Syndication & Licensing](#)
 - [Licensing Q&As](#)
 - [Get Alice! on Your Website](#)
 - [Full Site Syndication](#)
 - [Link to Go Ask Alice!](#)

Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.

If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

Source URL: <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/how-much-alcohol-day>

Links

- [1] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/how-much-alcohol-day>
- [2] <http://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/>
- [3] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/alcohol-other-drugs>
- [4] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/alcohol>
- [5] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/how-can-i-help-my-drunk-friend>
- [6] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/when-drinking-same-amount-alcohol-are-you-more-intoxicated-air-ground>
- [7] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/suddenly-drinking-alcohol-makes-me-sick>
- [8] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/better-drink-one-day-or-many-one-time-0>
- [9] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/counseling-and-psychological-services-cps-morningside>
- [10] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/columbia-health-basics-program-morningside>
- [11] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/mental-health-services-cuimc>
- [12] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/student-health-service-basics-program-cuimc>
- [13] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/addiction-information-management-strategies-aims-cuimc>