

The facts about...

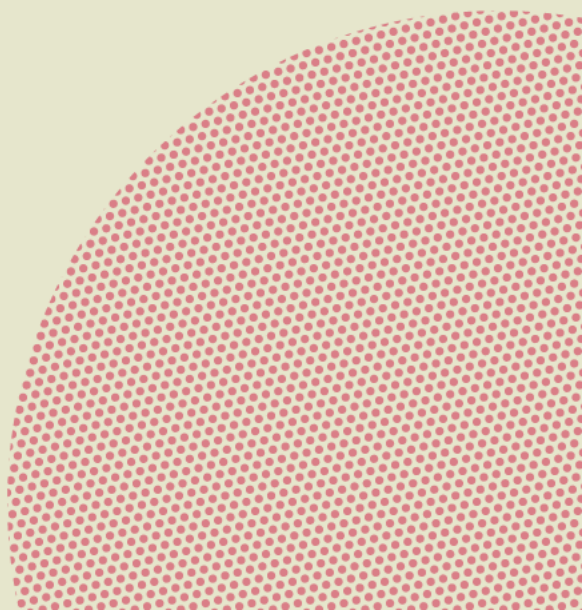
Alcohol and Sex

for the facts
drinkaware.co.uk

**Five key
things you
need to
know**

Whether you're married, in a relationship or single, alcohol often plays a part in people's sex lives.

While people might drink in an attempt to boost sexual confidence, alcohol can actually have a negative effect on your sexual performance. Regularly drink above the daily guidelines and it can also affect your libido so you're less likely to want to have sex, which could in turn have negative consequences for your relationship.



1

Regular drinking can turn temporary impotence into a long-term problem

After too much alcohol men may find it difficult to get and maintain an erection – often referred to as “brewer’s droop”. This is because alcohol depresses the central nervous system and can inhibit the production of testosterone, a key hormone for sexual function.

If men regularly drink over the daily unit guidelines of 3–4 units, this temporary problem can become a long-term one. It can cause testosterone deficiency and shrink the testicles, leading to impotence.



2

Drinking too much can reduce a women's sexual sensitivity

It's a myth that drinking too much only affects men in the bedroom.

In both sexes, sexual response is reduced by regular and prolonged drinking. In these cases, research has shown that women can:

- **experience reduced lubrication**
- **find it harder to have an orgasm**
- **have orgasms that are less intense**



3

Drinking over the lower-risk guidelines can affect your sex drive

Regularly drinking to excess depresses your central nervous system – which can make it more difficult to become sexually aroused.

Too much alcohol can actually reduce sexual desire. This can lead to all sorts of problems in long-term relationships – for instance when one partner feels they aren't getting enough attention from the other.



4

You're more likely to have unprotected sex if you've had a lot to drink

Alcohol reduces our ability to think clearly, so when you drink excessively you are more likely to take risks. These risks can include putting yourself in unsafe situations, like forgetting to use a condom.

Research shows that you're three times more likely to have unprotected sex if you've been drinking¹. This can put you at risk of unwanted pregnancy or catching a sexually transmitted infection (STI) such as chlamydia, genital warts or HIV.

The best way to protect yourself against these things is to use a condom and to drink within the guidelines so you keep a clear head.



Nearly 427,000 new cases of sexually transmitted infections were diagnosed in the UK in 2011.²

¹ Independent Advisory Group on Sex and HIV 2007, 'Sex, Drugs, Alcohol and Young People' p.22.

² HIV/Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), Health Protection Agency, Volume 6, number 22, 31 May 2012. Available at http://www.hpa.org.uk/hpr/infections/hiv_sti.htm


5

Too much alcohol can affect your sexual judgment

You may feel like drinking boosts your confidence, but the slurring and sickness that can come after too much alcohol can look less than attractive to the object of your affections.

Drinking too much can make you vulnerable. You're more likely to get intimate with someone you wouldn't normally have if you'd been sober, which may lead to you going further than you want to. If you've had too much to drink, you might not even remember having sex.

Alcohol is the drug most commonly used to spike drinks in cases of 'date rape' – which is why it pays to know exactly what's going into your glass at all times. Sexual assault can happen to anyone, however old or young they are, and whether they're male, female, gay, straight or bisexual.



Nearly 40% of 1,000 16 and 17-year-olds surveyed by Drinkaware said they drank alcohol to increase their confidence with someone they were attracted to.³

³ YouGov plc online poll for Drinkaware, 3-6 July 2009. Total sample was 1,071 16-17-year-olds living in Great Britain.

Staying in control

The government advises that people should not regularly drink more than the daily unit guidelines of 3–4 units of alcohol for men (equivalent to a pint and a half of 4% beer) and 2–3 units of alcohol for women (equivalent to a 175 ml glass of 13% wine). 'Regularly' means drinking every day or most days of the week.



Here are three ways you can keep your drinking and sex life under control:

A Give alcohol-free days a go.

Many medical experts recommend taking regular days off from drinking to ensure you don't become addicted to alcohol.

B Alternate alcoholic drinks with water or a soft drink.

This will slow down the rate of your drinking and means you'll drink less over the course of the evening.

C Practise safe sex.

Carrying a condom along with your keys and mobile phone – and using it properly – can make sex far less risky whether you plan to drink or not.

We've got the answers at **drinkaware.co.uk**

Advice

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Further information

Your GP can help you figure out if you should make any changes in your drinking, and offer help and advice on sexual health and contraception.

If you are concerned about the effects of alcohol on your fertility and sexual health, you can talk confidentially to Drinkline on 0800 917 8282.

The Family Planning Association can help you make informed choices about sex and contraception. Visit their website at www.fpa.org.uk

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