

Limit Alcohol



Drinking alcohol may be enjoyable, but it also can cause a number of health problems and other issues. If you choose to drink alcohol, moderate drinking reduces your risk for these problems. Your VA health care team can address your concerns and answer any questions you may have about alcohol use.

Drinking alcohol may bring enjoyment (relaxation, social interactions, taste) as well as a variety of problems such as:

- Reduced inhibitions (doing and saying things you wouldn't do or say sober)
- Motor impairment, car crashes, and other accidents
- Memory/concentration problems
- Negative interactions with prescribed medications

If you do choose to drink alcohol, drinking moderately reduces your risk for alcohol-related problems. Here are some recommended limits:

- Women: 1 drink a day and no more than 7 drinks per week
- Men: 2 drinks a day and no more than 14 drinks per week
- Anyone over 64 years of age: 1 drink a day and no more than 7 drinks per week

- Avoid heavy drinking, defined as 5 or more drinks in 2 hours (men), 4 or more drinks on 1 occasion (women and all people over age 64)
- These guidelines refer to a drink equal to a 12-oz. beer (5%), a 5-oz. glass of wine (12%) or 1 1/2 oz. spirits (80 proof)

Are you wondering or concerned about how much or how often you drink?

Talk to any member of your VA health care team.

Your VA health care team is not there to label or judge you. Instead, they will listen to your concerns and discuss a variety of different options available to help you reduce or stop your alcohol use and live a healthier, more fulfilling lifestyle.

Consult the Veterans Health Library:

<http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org/>

The Veterans Health Library (VHL) offers Veterans, their families, and caregivers 24/7 internet access to comprehensive, Veteran-focused health information that's consistent with VA clinical practice. Its information, resources, and tools are engaging, "Veteran-friendly," and written in plain language. VHL helps Veterans understand and manage health problems, make informed health decisions, and actively partner with their health care teams. Items within the VHL on Limit Alcohol:



- Things to Know About Alcohol
http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org/Search/142,UG4974_VA

Take a private and anonymous screening*:

Rethinking Your Drinking:

<https://www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/>

Explore these additional Department of Veterans Affairs Resources:

- Limit Alcohol: A Healthy Living Message
https://www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy_Living/Limit_Alcohol.asp
- Limit Alcohol Whiteboard Video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-k7Zq29QFU>
- PTSD and Problems with Alcohol Use – This site gives information on how PTSD and alcohol affect each other and where to get help.
https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/related/problem_alcohol_use.asp
- VetChange – a free and confidential online program for Veterans and active duty military who are concerned about their drinking
<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/change>
- Alcohol and Hepatitis C – Use this interactive guide to learn what you need to know about hepatitis C and alcohol use, including alcohol's effect on liver scarring, viral load, and response to treatment.
<https://www.hepatitis.va.gov/hcv/index.asp>
- Drugs, Alcohol, and HIV - Use this interactive guide if you are HIV positive to learn what alcohol and other "recreational" drugs will do to your body.
<https://www.hiv.va.gov/patient/daily/alcohol-drugs/index.asp>

Other Federal Government Resources

(*you are leaving the Department of Veterans Affairs website.)

National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

- <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health> – Find publications, frequently asked questions, and other resources. Most are available in Spanish. Topics include family history, tips for cutting down drinking, drinking and pregnancy, and more.

Additional resources and web-based tools

- **Moderate.** If you've decided you need to cut back on your drinking, consider the Moderate Drinking online app (www.moderatedrinking.com). Also consider the mutual help group, Moderation Management (www.moderation.org). It is the only mutual help group that is supportive of people cutting back on their drinking.
- **Stop.** If you want to stop drinking or using drugs, consider the Overcoming Addictions online app (www.overcomingaddictions.net). It is an abstinence-focused, cognitive-behavioral program based on SMART Recovery (www.smartrecovery.org). SMART Recovery is an alternative to Alcoholics Anonymous (www.aa.org).