

ALCOHOL: Is Your Health at Risk?

What counts as A DRINK?



A drink is:

- One 12-ounce can of beer
- One 5-ounce glass of wine
- One shot of hard liquor (1½ ounces)

Are you at risk?

If you drink, taking a look at your drinking pattern and knowing your risks is important for your health, now and in the future. Know the difference between “low-risk” versus “risky” or “harmful” drinking. You owe it to yourself!

What is “low-risk” drinking?

- For healthy adults age 65 and under:

LOW-RISK DRINKING LIMITS	MEN	WOMEN
	No more than 4 drinks on any day	No more than 3 drinks on any day
	AND	
Per WEEK	No more than 14 drinks per week	No more than 7 drinks per week

To stay low risk, keep within BOTH the single-day AND weekly limits.

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

- For people over 65: low-risk limits are 3 drinks a day or 7 drinks a week.
- Women who are pregnant or may become pregnant should not drink.

What’s “risky” or “harmful” drinking?

- Risky drinking is drinking more than the single-day or weekly amounts shown above.
- Harmful drinking is drinking more than the single-day or weekly amounts shown above, and having negative effects from drinking such as accidents, not being able to stop drinking, or not doing what you normally do (work, school, family) because of drinking.

What can happen from “risky” or “harmful” drinking?

- “Risky” or “harmful” drinkers are at greater risk for health problems—cancer, obesity, high blood pressure, stroke, injury, diabetes, accident/death, suicide, and cirrhosis.
- It makes a difference both how much you drink on any day and how often you have a heavy drinking day.
- The more drinks in a day and the more heavy drinking days over time, the greater risk for problems.

Tips for cutting down on drinking

- Measure and Count.** Measure drinks per standard drink size and count how much you drink on your phone, a card in your wallet, or a calendar.
- Set Goals.** Decide how many days a week you want to drink, and how many drinks to have on those days.
- Pace and Space.** Pace yourself. Sip slowly. Have no more than one drink per hour. Alternate “drink spacers”—non-alcohol drinks (water, soda, or juice).
- Include Food.** Don’t drink on an empty stomach.
- Avoid “Triggers.”** What triggers you to drink? Avoid people, places, and activities that trigger the urge to drink.
- Plan to Handle Urges.** When an urge hits: remind yourself of reasons for changing; talk it through with someone; do a healthy, distracting activity; or “urge surf” and accept the feeling and ride it out, knowing it will pass.
- Know your “no.”** Have a polite, convincing “no” ready for times when you don’t want a drink.

Adapted from US Department of Health and Human Services, NIH, NIAAA

Helpful Links:

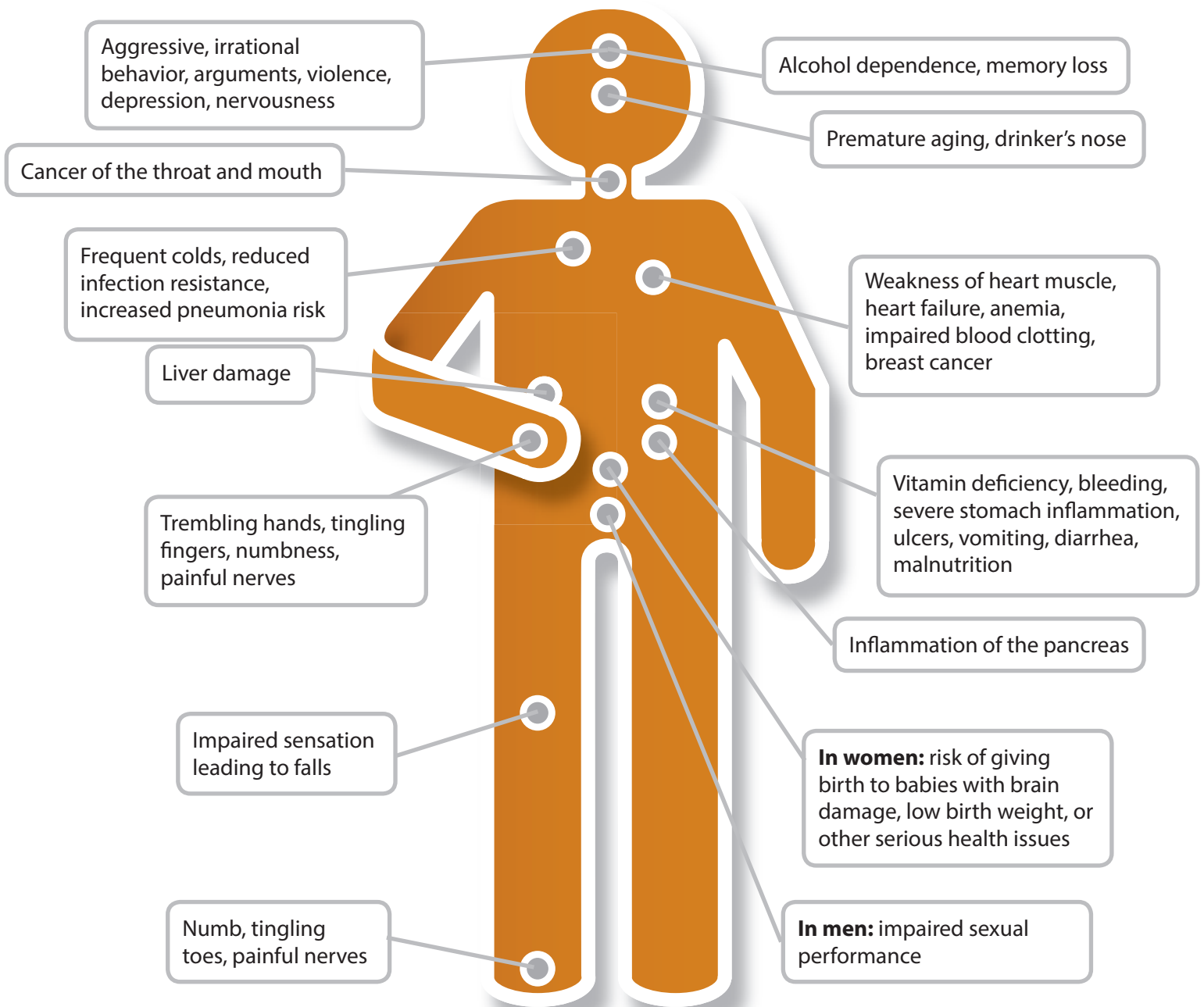
- <http://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/>
- <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health>
- <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>

Adapted from the Mid-America ATTC /UMKC SBIRT Project



RISKY AND HARMFUL DRINKING

Effects on the Body



Alcohol can worsen existing health problems:

- Liver disease
- Cardiovascular disease
- Diabetes
- Ulcers and other gastrointestinal problems
- Depression and anxiety
- Sleep problems

Something to think about:

Harmful drinking frequently leads to social, legal, medical, domestic, job, and financial problems.

Alcohol may shorten your lifespan and lead to accidental injury or death. This can happen even in the absence of physiological signs.