

# A PROVIDER GUIDE FOR Addressing Unhealthy Alcohol Use

## The 5 A's Approach to Reducing Alcohol Use

- Assess current drinking behaviors
- Advise on alcohol use
- Assist in exploring reasons for change
- Agree on options for risk reduction
- Arrange follow up



Review the score from the AUDIT. Use the table below to help determine whether a person has alcohol use disorder vs. risky drinking behavior (without alcohol use disorder)

### AUDIT SCORE

MEN	WOMEN	
<6	<4	Alcohol use disorder unlikely. Proceed with counseling for risky drinking.
6-14	4-12	Review questions 4-6. If score < 2, proceed with counseling for risky drinking. If score ≥ 2, alcohol use disorder likely. Counsel, discuss options, consider referral (e.g., CBT, 12-step) and medication.
≥15	≥13	Alcohol use disorder likely. Counsel, discuss options, consider referral (e.g., CBT, 12-step) and medication.

### SUGGESTED APPROACHES

Would you mind if we talked for a few minutes about your drinking and your health?  
 How does drinking fit into your life?  
 What do you know about drinking and your health?  
 So what I hear you say is ...

### STEP 2: ADVISE

Would you like to know more about recommended drinking limits?  
 For healthy men up to age 65:
 

- No more than 4 drinks in a day AND no more than 14 drinks in a week

 For healthy women, and healthy men over age 65:
 

- No more than 3 drinks in a day AND no more than 7 drinks in a week

### Review drinking patterns and risk

What is your reaction to this information?  
 Would you be willing to come back for another visit to talk more about your alcohol use?  
 Would you be willing to keep a record of your drinking in preparation for that visit?

### NEXT VISIT

Since your last visit, have you been able to keep a diary?
 

- What was it like to complete the diary?
- Tell me your thoughts about how much you drank.
- Tell me about areas that concern you, if any.

Help me to understand a few things about your drinking.
 

- For you, what are the good things about drinking?
- What are the bad things?

 Would it be helpful to compare your drinking over the past month with recommended drinking limits?

### Review drinking diary and drinking patterns

What is your reaction to hearing this information?  
 What do you know about the health risks of drinking?  
 Would it be ok if I told you a little more?

### Review health risks

What do you think about this information?

How important is it to you to change the amount of alcohol you drink?



Why didn't you rate yourself LOWER? (Why is it important?)  
 Why didn't you rate yourself HIGHER? (What doubts do you have?)  
 So what I heard you say ...

How confident are you that you could change the amount of alcohol you drink?



Why didn't you rate yourself LOWER? (What are your sources of confidence?)  
 Why didn't you rate yourself HIGHER? (What are the barriers?)  
 So what I heard you say ...

WHAT'S YOUR DRINKING PATTERN?	HOW COMMON IS THIS PATTERN?	HOW COMMON ARE ALCOHOL USE DISORDERS IN DRINKERS WITH THIS PATTERN?
<b>DAILY LIMITS</b> Men – 4 drinks Women – 3 drinks <b>WEEKLY LIMITS</b> Men – 14 drinks Woman – 7 drinks	Percentage of adults	Number with alcohol use disorders
Never exceed the daily or weekly limits	72%	Less than 1 in 100
Exceed only the daily limit	16%	1 in 5
Exceed both daily and weekly limits	10%	Almost 1 in 2

Alcohol can cause many health problems.

- Risky drinking is associated with:
  - Cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, colon, liver, and breast
  - Liver disease
  - Stroke
  - Heart disease
  - Pancreatitis
  - Injuries and accidents
  - Miscarriages / still birth
  - Depression and suicide
- Unhealthy alcohol use is the third leading cause of preventable death in the United States.
  - Alcohol is responsible for 85,000 deaths a year in the US.

**WHAT'S A STANDARD DRINK?**

**STEP 4: AGREE**

**MENU OF OPTIONS FOR REDUCING RISK**

**MENU OF OPTIONS FOR REDUCING RISK**

**STEP 5: ARRANGE FOLLOWUP**

Below are standard drink equivalents as well as the number of standard drinks in different container sizes for each beverage. These are approximate, since different brands and types of beverages vary in their actual alcohol content.

STANDARD DRINK EQUIVALENTS	APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF STANDARD DRINKS IN:
<b>BEER or WINE COOLER</b>	
12 oz.  5% alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12 oz. = 1</li> <li>16 oz. = 1.3</li> <li>22 oz. = 2</li> <li>40 oz. = 3.3</li> </ul>
<b>MALT LIQUOR / MICROBREWS</b>	
8-9 oz.  7% alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12 oz. = 1.5</li> <li>16 oz. = 2</li> <li>22 oz. = 2.5</li> <li>40 oz. = 4.5</li> </ul>
<b>TABLE WINE</b>	
5 oz.  12% alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a 750-mL (25-oz.) bottle = 5</li> </ul>
<b>80-PROOF SPIRITS (hard liquor)</b>	
1.5 oz.  40% alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a mixed drink = 1 or more*</li> <li>a pint (16 oz.) = 11</li> <li>a fifth (25 oz.) = 17</li> <li>1.75 L (59 oz.) = 39</li> </ul> <p><i>*Note:</i> Depending on factors such as the type of spirits and the recipe, one mixed drink can contain from one to three standard drinks.</p>

Are you ready to think about making a change in your drinking?

**If YES:**

- What ideas have you thought of to address your drinking?
- Would you be interested in seeing a list of things that other patients have tried?
- What do think about these options?

**If NO:**

- It can be difficult to change.
- Your current level of drinking increases the risk of health problems from alcohol that are potentially avoidable.
- We are available to talk with you further about ways you could be healthier.

- KEEP TRACK OF MY DRINKING**
- Keep a diary of the number of drinks I have daily.
  - Know the standard drink sizes.
  - Measure drinks when I make them at home.
  - Ask servers not to “top off” a partially filled wine glass.

- MANAGE MY URGES TO DRINK**
- Avoid visiting places that make me feel like drinking.
  - Avoid people who may encourage me to drink when I don’t want to.
  - Schedule activities to occupy me during times of the day that make me feel like drinking.
  - Avoid activities that give me the urge to drink.
  - Keep little or no alcohol in the home.

- PACE MYSELF**
- Sip all drinks slowly.
  - Don’t drink on an empty stomach.
  - Drink a few glasses of water before drinking alcoholic beverages.
  - Only have one alcoholic drink an hour.
  - Alternate non-alcoholic drinks with alcohol containing drinks.
  - Bring only a set amount of cash to the bar. Leave the ATM/credits cards at home.

- MAKE PLANS**
- Make a list of goals for changing my drinking habits.
  - Share my drinking goals with my spouse and friends.
  - Plan in advance how many days per week to drink and how many drinks I’ll have on those days.
    - Healthy men up to age 65: no more than 4 drinks/day AND no more than 14 drinks/week
    - Healthy women, and men over age 65: no more than 3 drinks/day AND no more than 7 drinks/weeks
  - Schedule days in which I do not drink at all.
  - Practice polite but firm strategies for saying “no thanks” before I go out to drink.

**OTHER**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

