

ALCOHOL AND YOUR HEALTH

Below is a brief explanation of how alcohol affects your health and your work performance; the following information was extracted from the HSE Website, which can be found at www.hse.gov.uk

Alcohol is a positive part of life for many people and most of the time drinking alcohol doesn't cause any problems. But drinking too much or at the wrong time can be harmful. The Government's guidance on sensible drinking, published in December 1995, lists the following as examples of specific situations when the best advice is not to drink at all:

- Before or during driving.
- Before using machinery, electrical equipment or ladders.
- Before working or in the workplace when appropriate functioning would be adversely affected by alcohol.

Fig 1 describes what happens to someone when they drink alcohol. It is easy to see from this how drinking alcohol at lunchtime or before coming on shift can affect your work performance. The effects of heavy drinking the previous night can last well into the next day.

FIG1: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DRINK ALCOHOL

- Alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream within a few minutes of being drunk and carried to all parts of your body including the brain.
- The concentration of alcohol in the body, known as the 'blood alcohol concentration', depends on many factors, but principally, how much you have drunk, how long you have been drinking, whether you have eaten, and your size or weight. It is difficult to know exactly how much alcohol is in your bloodstream or what effect it may have.
- It takes a healthy liver about 1 hour to break down and remove 1 unit of alcohol. A unit is equivalent to 8gm or 10ml (1cl) of pure alcohol. The following all contain one unit of alcohol.

A half pint of ordinary strength beer, lager or cider (3.5% ABV)

A single 25ml measure of spirits (40% ABV)

A small glass of wine (9% ABV)

- If someone drinks 2 pints of ordinary strength beer at lunchtime or half a bottle of wine (i.e. 4 units), they will still have alcohol in their bloodstream 3 hours later. Similarly, if someone drinks heavily in the evening they may be still over the legal drink drive limit the following morning.
- Black coffee, cold showers and fresh air won't sober someone up. Only time can remove alcohol from the bloodstream.

Drinking alcohol raises the drinker's pressure. This can increase the risk of coronary heart disease and some kinds of stroke. Regularly drinking more than the daily benchmarks (Fig2) also increases the risk of liver damage, cirrhosis of the liver, and cancers of the mouth and throat. People who drink very heavily may develop psychological problems, including depression.

FIG2; DAILY BENCHMARKS

The following benchmarks are a guide to how much adult men and women can drink in a day without putting their health at risk. They apply whether you drink every day, once or twice a week, or occasionally. The benchmarks are not targets to drink up to. There are times and circumstances when it makes sense not to drink at all.

MEN - If you drink between 3 and 4 units a day or less, there are no significant risks to your health
BUT...

If you consistently drink 4 or more units a day, there is an increasing risk to your health.

WOMEN - If you drink between 2 and 3 units a day or less, there are no significant risks to your health
BUT...

If you consistently drink 3 or more units a day, there is an increasing risk to your health.

Note: the benchmarks don't apply to young people who have not yet reached physical maturity

Being under the influence of drink and/or drugs at work could end up in instant dismissal, as clients have the right to run an alcohol or drugs test at anytime, any personnel who tests positive will be immediately dismissed from site and from ABFAD Limited.