

# Identifying At-Risk Drinking



**The legal drinking age is 21. If you're under 21 years old, you should not be drinking alcohol.\***

## What is At-Risk Drinking?

At-risk or heavy drinking is defined as:

- More than 4 drinks on any day or more than 14 per week for men
- More than 3 drinks on any day or more than 7 per week for women

**Too much + too often = too risky.<sup>1</sup>**



**1 beer**

=



**1 glass of wine**

=



**1 cocktail/mixed drink**

## The Risks Are Serious

At-risk or heavy drinking (sometimes called *binge drinking*) can cause serious health problems and complications, including:

- Chronic diseases
- Cancer
- Unintended injuries
- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders
- Memory and learning problems
- Alcohol use disorder<sup>2</sup>

## Make a Change

Make a change now if you think your drinking habits could be considered at risk. These lifestyle changes and tips can help you drink less. Other resources can help you quit, too.

- ✔ **Set a goal:** Do you want to stop going to bars and parties? Do you want to drink less at home? Writing down your goals can prevent you from drinking too much.
- ✔ **Do something new:** Plan different activities that don't involve alcohol. This is a chance to start new healthy behaviors and hobbies.
- ✔ **Avoid triggers:** These triggers are the places, people and situations that cause you to drink, even if you don't want to.
- ✔ **Say "no":** It's OK to say "no" to an alcoholic drink.<sup>3</sup>
- ✔ **Get help:** Talk with your doctor about how much you drink. Your doctor may recommend counseling if you drink too much.<sup>4</sup>

## Help is Available

- **1-800-662-HELP (4357)**. This free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year hotline can refer you to local treatment facilities, support groups and community organizations.
- **1-888-447-9800 (TTY/PA RELAY 711)**. Our Member Relations team can connect you with a behavioral health managed care organization.

## \* The Penalties for Underage Drinking in PA

A person under the age of 21 may be convicted for purchasing, attempting to purchase, possessing, consuming or transporting liquor, beer, wine and other alcoholic drinks.

For a first offense, a person under 21 can be ordered to pay a \$500 criminal fine and lose their driving privileges for up to 90 days. For a second offense, a convicted person can be ordered to pay a \$1000 criminal fine and lose their driving privileges for up to a year.

In addition, the offense will go on the person's criminal record, which may have to be disclosed to colleges, graduate schools and employers in the application process, and could potentially affect other issues like insurance rates.

### Sources:

1. National Institutes of Health staff, "What's 'At-risk' or 'Heavy Drinking'?", National Institutes of Health, accessed April 2, 2019, <https://www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/How-much-is-too-much/Is-your-drinking-pattern-risky/Whats-At-Risk-Or-Heavy-Drinking.aspx>.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "Fact Sheets—Binge Drinking," last reviewed October 24, 2018, <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/binge-drinking.htm>.
3. National Institutes of Health, "Tips to Try," accessed April 2, 2019, <https://www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/Thinking-about-a-change/Strategies-for-cutting-down/Tips-To-Try.aspx>.
4. CDC, "Fact Sheets—Preventing Excessive Alcohol Use," last modified October 17, 2016, <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/prevention.htm>.

**Member Relations is available to help you 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1-888-477-9800 (TTY/PA RELAY 711).**

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ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-888-477-9800 (TTY/PA RELAY: 711).

ВНИМАНИЕ: Если вы говорите на русском языке, то вам доступны бесплатные услуги перевода. Звоните 1-888-477-9800 (телетайп/PA RELAY: 711).

注意：如果您使用繁體中文，您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電1-888-477-9800 (TTY/PA RELAY: 711)。



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