



HELP CARD

# Alcohol – The Facts

- Alcohol, or ethanol, is a colourless liquid which is made by fermenting sugars.
- Alcohol has been made and drunk by human beings for thousands of years because of its effects on mood and behaviour.
- Millions of pounds are spent each year on advertising; studies show that young people are more likely to drink if exposed to alcohol advertising.
- The number of children needing medical help after drinking is rising.
- 40% of hospital accident and emergency admissions are alcohol related (after midnight this rises to 70%).
- Research shows that alcohol is a major factor in criminal behaviour;
  - 63% of sentenced male prisoners admitted to hazardous drinking before they went to prison.
  - 69% of male binge drinkers and 45% of female binge drinkers reported at least one violent incident last year.



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# The Liver

- The liver is a very large body organ which has over 500 important functions.
- It is a pinkish reddish brown colour and is divided into lobes.
- The liver is a vital organ, it is involved in:
  - The productions and excretion of **bile** which allows us to digest fats.
  - The breakdown of **insulin** which controls our blood sugar.
  - The production of the factors which allow your blood to clot when you have been injured.
  - The production of **urea** which you get rid of in your urine.
  - The storage of many vitamins and minerals.
  - The breakdown of substances such as alcohol which would be harmful to the body.
- Without your liver you would not be able to live. Many people who have diseases of the liver need to have a **liver transplant** and there is a long transplant waiting list.



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# The effects of alcohol on the body

- Alcohol affects all kinds of cells in the body and stops some of them working; the more you take, the worse the effects.
- 2 units of alcohol would be in a pint of regular beer or cider, a large vodka, a glass of wine; the stronger the drink, the more units it contains.
- Alcohol is high in calories (a pint of beer has the same calories as a medium bar of chocolate).
- The liver breaks down most alcohol but some comes out in your breath, skin, and your urine.
- As you drink:

2 units	4 units	6 units	8 units	10-12 units
You are more talkative and relaxed. You may already be over the drink-driving limit.	Your face is flushed and your attention span shortens. You are getting dehydrated.	Your reaction time is slower. Your liver is working overtime.	You are likely to be confused and you are much more likely to get into trouble. You are clumsy and likely to have an accident.	Your vision is blurred and you are likely to be dizzy. If you do this regularly your liver will be damaged.

- After 14-18 units you would move from being out of control of your body systems, vomiting and wetting yourself, to being unconscious; death can occur due to choking on vomit.

Let's Talk