



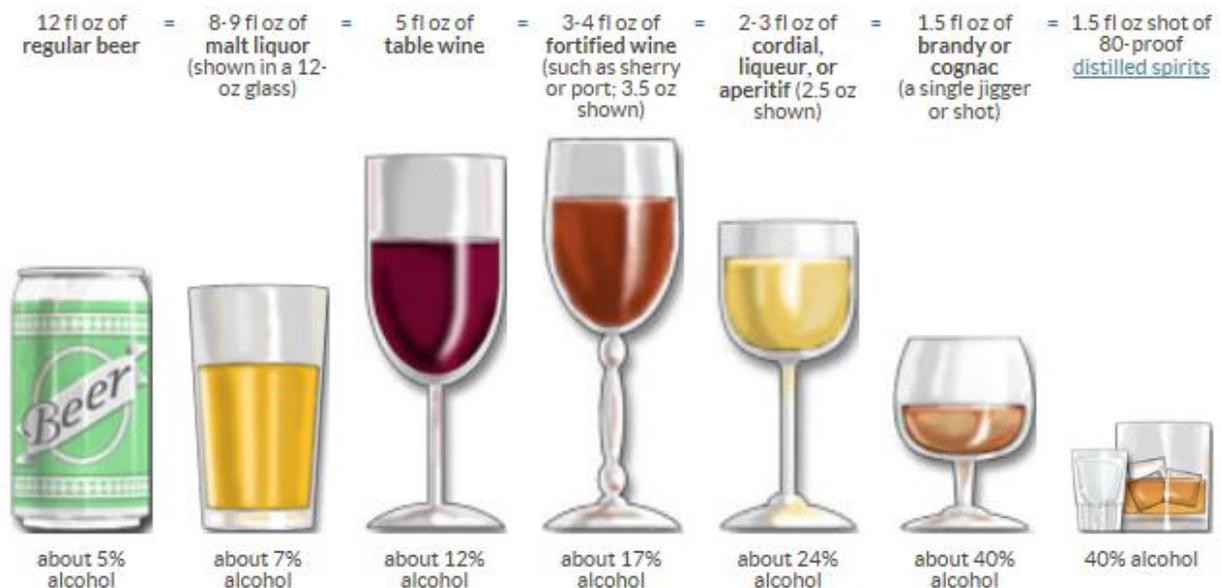
## Excessive Use of Alcohol

Many people enjoy a drink or two, especially when socializing with friends and family, but drinking too much or too often can lead to terrible consequences. Alcohol remains the third leading preventable cause of death in the United States, killing more than 80,000 people each year.<sup>1</sup> Alcohol use can lead to injuries, health problems, birth defects, and other consequences when used in excess.<sup>2</sup> Excessive alcohol use includes one or more of the following<sup>2</sup>:

- Heavy drinking, typically defined as more than four drinks (see below for what counts as a drink) per day and 14 drinks per week for men and more than three drinks per day and 7 drinks per week for women
- Binge drinking, typically defined as five or more drinks on a single occasion for men, and four or more drinks on a single occasion for women
- Underage drinking
- Drinking while pregnant

### How to avoid heavy or binge drinking

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 25 percent of adults had at least one heavy drinking day in the past year.<sup>3</sup> Binge drinking and heavy drinking can be avoided by understanding how much alcohol your drink contains, how much is considered “healthy” for you, and also by listening to your own body when consuming alcohol. The graphic below shows a variety of alcoholic beverages and how much of each is considered “1 Drink”.<sup>5</sup>





When choosing a drink, consider the following limits provided by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.<sup>4</sup>

- Low risk drinking limits for women: no more than 3 drinks on any single day and no more than 7 drinks per week
- Low risk drinking limits for men: no more than 4 drinks on any single day and no more than 14 drinks per week

These are recommended limits, however, it is extremely important to consider other factor such as your weight, height, how much food you have consumed, medicatons you are taking, and health status.

## What is the Harm?

Frequent heavy drinking has been linked to several risks to one's personal life, physical and mental health, injury, and death.<sup>5</sup> Alcohol has been a factor in about 50 percent of severe trauma injuries and sexual assaults, and 40 percent of fatal motor vehicle crashes, suicides, and fatal falls.<sup>5</sup> Health risks associated with heavy alcohol consumption include: heart disease, liver disease, sleep disorders, depression, stroke, bleeding from the stomach, various types of cancer, and more. It is important to remember that consuming any amount of alcohol can alter your judgment and function. Alcohol enters your bloodstream immediately and the effects can appear as soon as 10 minutes after your first sip.<sup>6</sup> As your blood alcohol concentration (BAC) level increases with the more alcohol you consume, one can experience reduced inhibitions, slurred speech and confusion, difficulty breathing, and memory loss. See below for tips on how to practice safe and responsible drinking every time.<sup>6</sup>



## Tips for safe and low risk drinking

The majority of Navy Reservists (88 percent) reported binge drinking on only one or two occasions per year compared to 81 percent active duty Sailors.<sup>7</sup> A larger proportion of Navy Reservists were more likely to report staying in the daily alcoholic drink limits compared to active duty Sailors (93 percent and 86 percent, respectively).<sup>7</sup> Keep up the good work by following the three easy steps below to responsible driking:

1. Plan ahead for a safe ride home
2. Don't try to keep up with others
3. Know your limit, before you get there.



## References

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- <sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Early Release of Selected Estimates Based on Data From the National Health Interview Survey, 2014. [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhis/earlyrelease/earlyrelease201506\\_09.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhis/earlyrelease/earlyrelease201506_09.pdf). Published June 2015. Accessed October 2015.
- <sup>4</sup> National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Drinking Levels Defined. <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health/overview-alcohol-consumption/moderate-binge-drinking>. Accessed October 2015.
- <sup>5</sup> National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Rethinking Drinking: Alcohol and your health. [http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/RethinkingDrinking/Rethinking\\_Drinking.pdf](http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/RethinkingDrinking/Rethinking_Drinking.pdf). Accessed October 2015.
- <sup>6</sup> National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Overview of Alcohol Consumption. <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health/overview-alcohol-consumption>. Accessed October 2015.
- <sup>7</sup> Fleet and Marine Corps Health Risk Assessment 2014. Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center EpiData Center Department. <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/Documents/health-promotion-wellness/general-tools-and-programs/HRA-2014-report-final.pdf>. Prepared May 2015. Accessed October 2015.