

Why talk about alcohol?

Many people don't realise they are drinking at harmful or hazardous levels. With the right support, it's possible to improve health and wellbeing by cutting down drinking or stopping altogether.

Using your skills to speak to someone about alcohol can motivate and support them to change their drinking behaviour. **Reducing alcohol consumption** can quickly improve physical and mental wellbeing.

How to structure a conversation

- 1. Ask:** Be aware of opportunities for change and raise the issue.
- 2. Explore:**
 - Use Open Discovery Questions, a non-judgemental attitude; try to avoid 'telling' people what to do.
 - Use **AUDIT C** to support identification of risk, alongside supporting [information](#) to help structure your conversation.
- 3. Act:** on the person's response:
 - Share the [Rethink your drink](#) resources for helpful tips on cutting down

OR

 - Refer to [Inclusion Recovery Hampshire](#) for further support. Anyone can self-refer for support.

DO ✓	AVOID ✗
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain Permission from the beginning to help people feel at ease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being judgemental or critical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask 'Open Discovery Questions' (What & How) to allow the conversation to be led by the person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using Closed questions which lead to a yes or no response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be curious, express empathy and use active listening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making assumptions about the individual – assumption is the death of support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look out for Opportunities for change as a prompt to start healthy conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising if the person is intoxicated

Opportunities for Change

Social issues

- Relationship problems and domestic violence.
- Criminal behaviour (e.g. driving offences, breach of the peace, shoplifting).
- Unsafe sex/sexual risk taking.
- Personal risk taking.
- Financial problems.
- Bereavement (which can lead to use of alcohol as a coping strategy).

Effects on mental health

- Anxiety and panic disorders.
- Depressive illness.
- Amnesia, memory disorders and dementia.
- Treatment resistance in other psychiatric illnesses and as a factor in relapse.
- Self-harm.

Effects on physical health

- Accidents/injuries.
- Gastrointestinal system, including dyspepsia (indigestion), gastritis and pancreatitis.
- Various liver abnormalities.
- Cardiovascular system, including cardiac arrhythmias, hypertension and stroke.
- Reproductive system problems and unexplained infertility.
- Cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, oesophagus, breast and colon.
- Other effects, including seizures, gout and eczema.

Occupational effects

- Repeated absenteeism, especially around weekends.
- Impaired work performance and accidents.
- Employment difficulties.

Conversation Starters

Gaining Permission

"Is it okay if we talk about how your drinking might be affecting your health?"

"Would it be okay to discuss...?"

Indirect ways to start a healthy chat:

"You mentioned that... you are drinking more often..."

"It sounds like... you might be interested in cutting down..."

"What makes you want to... cut down?"

"How is your drinking affecting your health?"

More direct approaches:

"What do you drink on a night out / at home?"

"What do you like about <alcoholic drink of choice> / how it makes you feel?"

"How often do you drink?"

Further guidance & training

[Alcohol: applying All Our Health](#) - Provides an overview of harm and key actions to take.

Free Alcohol Identification & Brief advice e-learning provided by [NHSE elfh Hub](#).