

**'First you take a drink, then the drink takes a drink, then the drink takes you'**

*– F Scott Fitzgerald –*

One standard unit of alcohol = One half-pint of average strength beer or lager, *or*  
One glass of wine, *or*  
One standard single measure of spirits.

Note: a can of high strength beer or lager may contain 3–4 units.

### **Recommendations for men**

If your total for the week is more than 28 units you should consider cutting down.

### **Recommendations for women**

If your total for the week is more than 21 units you should consider cutting down.

### **A heavy drinker**

A heavy drinker is somebody who drinks more than the recommended units. If you are a heavy drinker, as compared to a light drinker you are:

- ◆ twice as likely to die of heart disease;
- ◆ twice as likely to die of cancer;
- ◆ twelve times more likely to die of cirrhosis of the liver;
- ◆ three times more likely to die in a road traffic accident;
- ◆ six times more likely to commit suicide.

If you have ever been physically dependent on alcohol for 6 months, or addicted, then any alcohol is likely to be harmful. You are likely to find it difficult to become a social or 'controlled' drinker and it is best to abstain altogether.

### **Other facts**

- ◆ Approximately four times as many people in Britain are now experiencing serious problems related to their drinking than in the early 1960s.
- ◆ Cirrhosis of the liver is up by 60 per cent since 1955 in Britain.
- ◆ Alcohol dulls the action of the brain. Although it initially feels stimulating, it has a depressant effect.
- ◆ The body gets rid of alcohol by the liver oxidizing it. It takes the liver one hour to burn up a standard unit of alcohol.
- ◆ Hangovers are caused partly by impurities in alcoholic drinks, partly by dehydration and partly by low blood sugar. The darker in colour the drink, the more likely it is to cause a hangover.
- ◆ Alcohol is a diuretic, that is, it makes you urinate more than normal. Over a night's drinking, your body will lose more than it absorbs. For some people drinking a great deal of water before sleeping helps to avoid hangovers.
- ◆ Excessive drinking by pregnant women may harm the foetus. It is safest not to drink at all when you are pregnant.
- ◆ In the UK 50 per cent of all alcohol is drunk by 10 per cent of all drinkers.