

What Is A Standard Drink?



Many people are surprised to learn what counts as a drink.

The amount of liquid in your glass, can, or bottle does not necessarily match up to how much alcohol is actually in your drink.

Different types of beer, wine, or malt liquor can have very different amounts of alcohol content. For example, many light beers have almost as much alcohol as regular beer – about 85% as much. Here's another way to put it:

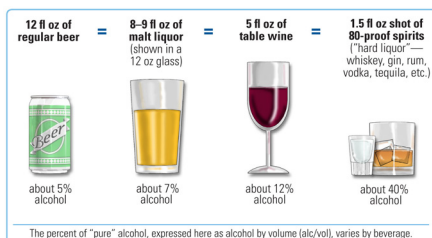
- Regular beer: 5% alcohol content
- Some light beers: 4.2% alcohol content

That's why it's important to know how much alcohol your drink contains. In the United States, one "standard" drink contains roughly 14 grams of pure alcohol, which is found in:

- 12 ounces of regular beer, which is usually about 5% alcohol
- 5 ounces of wine, which is typically about 12% alcohol
- 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits, which is about 40% alcohol

How do you know how much alcohol is in your drink?

Even though they come in different sizes, the drinks below are each examples of one standard drink:



Although the "standard" drink amounts are helpful for following health guidelines, they may not

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reflect customary serving sizes. For example, a single mixed drink made with hard liquor can contain 1 to 3 or more standard drinks, depending on the type of spirits and the recipe.

Moderate or "low-risk" drinking

Research shows that people who drink moderately may be less likely to experience an alcohol use disorder (AUD). These drinking levels, which differ for men and women, are:

For men: No more than 4 drinks on any single day AND no more than 14 drinks per week

For women: No more than 3 drinks on any single day AND no more than 7 drinks per week

To stay low risk for AUDs, you must keep within both the single-day and weekly limits.

Even within these limits, you can have problems if you drink too quickly or have other health issues. To keep your risk for problems low, make sure you:

- Drink slowly
- Eat enough while drinking

Certain people should avoid alcohol completely, including those who:

- Plan to drive a vehicle or operate machinery
- Take medications that interact with alcohol
- Have a medical condition that alcohol can aggravate
- Are pregnant or trying to become pregnant

About Heavy or "at-risk" drinking

For healthy adults in general, heavy drinking means consuming more than the single-day or the weekly amounts listed above. About 1 in 4 people who drink above these levels already has alcohol dependence or alcohol abuse problems.

Binge drinking

Binge drinking means drinking so much within about 2 hours that blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels reach 0.08g/dL. For women, this usually occurs after about 4 drinks, and for men,

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after about 5.

Drinking this way can pose health and safety risks, including car crashes and injuries. Over the long term, binge drinking can damage the liver and other organs.

To learn more about Alcohol, click here to read NCADD's [Understanding Alcohol and Alcoholism section](#).

Source: The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)

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Moderate & Binge Drinking

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