

What is binge drinking?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines “binge drinking” as “consuming five or more drinks on an occasion for men, or four or more drinks on an occasion for women.” The CDC reports 1 in 6 adults binge drinks, and binge drinking is more common among men and younger people ages 18-34.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism has a stricter definition of binge drinking: “Drinking alcohol that brings blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 percent,” the legal limit in most states, or higher. For adult men and women, that means drinking four to five drinks over the course of two hours.

What is a “drink”?

Standard U.S. drink sizes:

- 12 ounces of a 5 percent alcohol by volume (ABV) beer
- 8 ounces of 7 percent ABV malt liquor
- 5 ounces of 12 percent ABV wine
- 1.5 ounces of 40 percent (80-proof) ABV liquor

Using the CDC’s definition, binge drinking would include, on one occasion:

- Drinking a six-pack of beers like Budweiser, Coors or Heineken. Many craft beers have higher alcohol contents.
- Drinking an entire bottle of wine.
- Taking four or five shots.

How do I know if my drinking is a problem?

Clinicians use the Michigan Alcohol Screening Test (MAST) as one tool to help determine alcohol dependency. While it should not be used to self-diagnose, it is a quick screening tool you can speak about with your primary care provider. It includes questions like:

- Can you stop drinking without a struggle after one or two drinks?
- Has your drinking ever created problems between you and your wife, husband, a parent, or other relatives?
- Have you gotten into physical fights when drinking?
- Have you ever been in a hospital because of drinking?

- Have you ever lost a job because of your drinking?

For a full list of questions, [go to the National Library of Medicine website.](#)

Getting help

If you think your relationship with alcohol might be problematic:

- Call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) free, 24/7 hotline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357). You can also use their online search tool (<https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>) to look for treatment locations, or text your zip code to 435748 to see treatment locations nearby.
- Go to your county or state health department's website and search for recovery resources.
- Talk to your primary care provider about your alcohol use.