




## U.S. Adult Drinking Patterns

Nearly 3 in 10 U.S. adults engage in at-risk drinking patterns and thus would benefit from advice to cut down or a referral for further evaluation. During a brief intervention, you can use this chart to show that (1) most people abstain or drink within the recommended limits and (2) the prevalence of alcohol use disorders rises with heavier drinking. Though a wise first step, cutting to within the limits is not risk free, since motor vehicle crashes and other problems can occur at lower drinking levels.

| WHAT'S YOUR DRINKING PATTERN?   | HOW COMMON IS THIS PATTERN?   | HOW COMMON ARE ALCOHOL DISORDERS IN DRINKERS WITH THIS PATTERN? |
|---|---|---|
| <p><b>Based on the following limits—number of drinks:</b></p> <p>On any <b>DAY</b>—Never more than 4 (men) or 3 (women)<br/>– and –<br/>In a typical <b>WEEK</b>—No more than 14 (men) or 7 (women)</p> | Percentage of U.S. adults aged 18 or older*   | Combined prevalence of alcohol abuse and dependence             |
| <p><b>Never exceed the daily or weekly limits</b></p> <p>(2 out of 3 people in this group abstain or drink fewer than 12 drinks a year)</p>   |  <p>72%</p>  | fewer than <b>1 in 100</b>                                      |
| <p><b>Exceed only the daily limit</b></p> <p>(More than 8 out of 10 in this group exceed the daily limit <i>less than once a week</i>)</p>  |  <p>16%</p> | <b>1 in 5</b>   |
| <p><b>Exceed both daily and weekly limits</b></p> <p>(8 out of 10 in this group exceed the daily limit <i>once a week or more</i>)</p>  |  <p>10%</p> | almost <b>1 in 2</b>  |

\* Not included in the chart, for simplicity, are the 2 percent of U.S. adults who exceed *only* the weekly limits. The combined prevalence of alcohol use disorders in this group is 8 percent.