

FACT SHEET:

Alcohol & Safety

Personal safety is our ability to go about our everyday lives without fear or threat of violence or aggression. Going on a night out should be an enjoyable experience if alcohol is used responsibly and we are in control of our actions and behaviour.

How can alcohol affect our safety?

Evidence shows that people who have been drinking alcohol are more at risk of being the victim (or perpetrator) of attacks, robberies, muggings and sexual assaults.

An estimated **23,000 alcohol-related incidents** take place in the UK each week. Regular visitors to pubs and clubs are twice as likely to be victims of assault. So why is this? It's a known fact that when we drink alcohol, we are not fully in control.

Alcohol can:

- Affect our judgement and make it harder to decide what's safe and what's unsafe. Our judge of character can also be affected.
- Lower our inhibitions, which makes us less worried that something bad might happen.
- Make us more excitable, which can get us into dangerous situations as a result.
- Slow our reaction times, affecting vision, balance and making bodily movements harder to control.

When you have been drinking, it's important to avoid doing anything that requires physical co-ordination or quick reactions. Too much alcohol can make you prone to accidents.

Being aware is being safe

The most important thing when you are out is to drink responsibly and keep your wits about you. Don't assume that you're not at risk - this may get you into an unsafe situation. Remember that appearances can be deceptive. Keep this in mind if you are socialising with people you don't know very well, such as work colleagues or casual acquaintances.

Some tips for staying safe:

- Don't let people pressurise you to drink enough to make you drunk.
- If you're out with friends, look after each other and stick together.
- Be aware that you may appear threatening to other people when drunk and this may impact on how they behave towards you.
- If you encounter a potentially aggressive situation, try to talk your way out of it and don't use aggressive body language or words.
- No matter how much you feel able to look after yourself, you should never attempt to compete with weapons or gangs. If you find yourself in this situation, get away as fast as you can.
- Trust your instincts; they are there to warn you of danger.

Getting home safely

Finding a taxi can be difficult at the end of a night out so you might want to book one in advance. Make sure you have the numbers of local taxi companies in your wallet or mobile phone. Before you go out, it's a good idea to put some taxi money in another part of your wallet or somewhere that you won't pull it out at the bar and spend it.

If you're walking home, walk with someone you know and trust. If you have to walk alone, stick to well-lit and well used routes and keep your mobile phone with you. Let someone know where you are and agree to call them when you get home.

Alcohol and sexual health and safety

Alcohol can reduce sexual inhibitions, which in the wrong circumstances can result in disaster. If you're drunk and can't look out for yourself properly, you may be at risk of being taken advantage of sexually. Remember that alcohol is the most common date rape drug.

If you're out drinking and decide to go home with someone you don't know, it's important to consider whether you feel safe and comfortable with this decision.

Keeping safe means:

- Thinking twice before going home with a stranger- it's safer to get their number and arrange to meet up another time.
- Telling a friend who you're with and where - ask them to call you back at an arranged time to check you're okay.
- Being clear about whether you are comfortable having sex and not letting alcohol influence your decision.

For more information call
our Helpline on 01592 206 200 or visit www.fassaction.org.uk

- Using a condom to protect yourself and others from any unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection (including HIV).
- Not drinking so much that you can't say 'no'.

Alcohol and driving

Although there's a legal limit for how much alcohol a person can drink and still drive, there is no safe limit for drinking and driving. It's important to remember that even one drink affects your judgement and reaction times. Even at the legal limit, your chances of having an accident are more than doubled. If you've been drinking a lot the night before, you will still have alcohol in your bloodstream the next morning. Nearly one in six convicted drink-drivers are caught the morning after drinking.

Drink spiking

When you are out in a busy pub or club, there is a risk of drink spiking - where alcohol or drugs are added to your drink without your knowledge. You can use a spikey bottle stopper to prevent this from happening. You can buy a spikey from most supermarkets or online. Once a spikey is put in to the neck of a bottle, it cannot be removed and is thrown away with the bottle when the drink is finished. **It's also important to be aware that alcohol itself is still the most likely risk to your personal safety.**

Alcohol and drugs

Mixing alcohol with stimulant drugs (such as cocaine, ecstasy and amphetamines) may mean that you end up drinking more. This is because the drug covers up the effect of alcohol and you don't notice how drunk you are getting. This can be dangerous to your personal safety and health.

Other people's drinking

It may be that you are concerned about someone else's drinking. If you're worried about your safety or experiencing problems because of another person's drinking, help is available. There are contact details at the end of this fact sheet of organisations that offer confidential support and information.

Important safety information

Never leave a drunk person on their own, especially if they seem sleepy. Turn them onto their side (recovery position) so that if they are sick, they won't choke. If you can't wake them and the person is causing you concern, **call 999**. Keep them warm and stay with them until help arrives.

Taking the next step

For support and further information available in Fife or Tayside please contact:

FASS Alcohol Support Service

Call us in confidence on

01592 206200

Access online help and support

www.fassaction.org.uk

[f](#) @FASSFife | [t](#) @FASSFife

Tayside Council on Alcohol

Call us in confidence on

01382 456012

Access online help and support

www.alcoholtayside.com

Other National information and support can be accessed through the following organisations:

Alcohol Focus Scotland: www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk

Breathing Space: 0800 83 85 87 | www.breathingspace.scot

Alcoholics Anonymous: Helpline: 0800 9177 650 | www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Drinkline (Advice and support): 0800 731 4314

This fact sheet has been developed by colleagues from TCA and FASS to support positive changes in risky alcohol use. Partners in the project wish to acknowledge the experience and information resources used within the network of local councils on alcohol which have informed this resource.

TCA receives funding from NHS Tayside, Angus Council, Dundee City Council, Perth and Kinross Council. FASS receives core funding from NHS Fife and Fife Council.