



# ALCOHOL POISONING

HOW TO AVOID IT  
HOW TO DEAL WITH IT



MÔN **DDIOGEL**  
**SAFER ANGLESEY**

# CAN ALCOHOL EVER BE A POISON?

Alcoholic drinks, when enjoyed sensibly and in moderation, can be a source of pleasure for many. But many things taken to excess can be poisonous enough to kill.

Alcohol is one. The fact is that if a person drinks large amounts of alcohol on one occasion, there is a risk of serious injury or even death. Unfortunately there are people who make this mistake every year - too many tragedies occur in consequence. But how much is too much?

**IT DEPENDS ON THE PERSON'S SIZE, WEIGHT, SEX, GENETIC MAKE-UP AND OTHER FACTORS.**

However, it is clear that if an average male drank a bottle of spirits or equivalent at one time, it would be enough to kill him. If you are small or female - or both - you may die or come close to death on half that amount.

**To find out more about how the effects of alcohol and to find out how many units you can drink safely, log on to [drinkaware.co.uk](http://drinkaware.co.uk)**

## HOW CAN ALCOHOL KILL?

Alcohol drunk in excess at one time affects the body in two ways that can be dangerous: it depresses the brain and it irritates the stomach.

**THE BRAIN CONTROLS BREATHING, THE HEART AND BODY TEMPERATURE. IN OTHER WORDS, IT CONTROLS THE BODY'S ACCELERATOR AND THERMOSTAT. IF TOO MUCH IS DRUNK, THE FOOT COMES OFF THE ACCELERATOR, THE THERMOSTAT IS SWITCHED OFF AND THE BODY WINDS DOWN UNTIL SOMETHING STOPS - SUCH AS YOUR HEART**

Add the second effect, the stomach irritation, and there is another danger. To vomit when the brain is malfunctioning means that choking to death is a real risk. Even worse, vomiting in this condition can trigger an instant nerve reflex that stops the heart - dead. If the two effects work together, a person could die from choking after a much smaller dose than is needed for direct poisoning.

# WHAT DOES A PERSON WITH ALCOHOL POISONING LOOK LIKE?

- The person will be collapsed.
- They will be difficult or impossible to rouse.
- The body will be winding down so the skin is cool and clammy.
- The breathing is slow and noisy.
- The pupils of the eyes may be wide.
- There may have been some vomiting.
- They may have wet themselves - or worse.

## HOW CAN I AVOID ALCOHOL POISONING?

### DO

- **Drink moderately**
- **Drink slowly**
- **Space your drinks with water or soft drinks.**
- **Eat with your drinks**

### DON'T

- **Drink to excess**
- **Drink too much of anything with which you are not familiar**
- **Drink drinks you have not seen mixed**
- **Drink for a bet or a competition**
- **Let drinking in rounds or "shouts" push you into drinking more than you want.**



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# What you should do in an emergency

## Dial 999

### DO

- CALL AN AMBULANCE
- SEE THAT THE PERSON'S MOUTH IS CLEAR AND THAT THEY CAN BREATHE
- TURN THEM ONTO THEIR SIDE (THE RECOVERY POSITION)
- KEEP THEM WARM
- WATCH THEM

### DON'T

- LEAVE THEM ALONE
- GIVE THEM BLACK COFFEE - OR ANYTHING ELSE.
- TRY TO WALK THEM ABOUT



# USEFUL CONTACTS

## **NORTH WEST WALES NHS TRUST SUBSTANCE MISUSE SERVICE**

Corporate Base  
The Old Surgery  
Castellfryn  
Star, Nr Gaerwen  
Ynys Môn  
Phone: 01248 718030  
Fax: 01248 718031  
e-mail: [smsreferrals@nww-tr.wales.nhs.uk](mailto:smsreferrals@nww-tr.wales.nhs.uk)

## **CAIS DRUG AND ALCOHOL AGENCY**

1st Floor  
Canolfan Penllyn  
Caernarfon  
Gwynedd  
LL55 1NN  
Phone: 01286 671005  
Fax: 01286 675312  
e-mail:  
[helen.roberts@cais.org.uk](mailto:helen.roberts@cais.org.uk)  
[www.cais.co.uk](http://www.cais.co.uk)

## **ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS**

Abbey Road Centre  
Abbey Road  
Bangor  
Gwynedd  
LL57 2EA  
Phone: 01248 354888  
Fax: 01248 370215

## **'AGAIN' SELF HELP GROUP**

St David's Priory  
Richmond Hill  
Holyhead  
Ynys Môn  
LL65 2HH  
Phone: 01407 761611

## **WALES DRUG AND ALCOHOL HELPLINE**

DAN 24/7  
0800 6 33 55 88  
Alcohol Concern  
[www.alcoholconcern.org.uk](http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk)

## **YNYS MÔN DRUGS AND ALCOHOL HELPLINE**

Phone: 01248 722580

## **SAMARITANS**

5A Llys Onnen  
Parc Menai  
Bangor  
Gwynedd  
LL57 4DF  
Phone: 01248 674985

## **CHILDLINE**

0800 1111