

# YOU+ALCOHOL+SAFETY

A guide on how to  
keep yourself safe  
when you're drinking





# ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT DRUG SPIKING? THINK AGAIN

There is a lot said about the dangers of drinks being spiked with drugs. However, the reality is that alcohol alone is far more likely to put you at risk, whether you are male or female. Evidence shows that people who have been drinking are more at risk of being the victim (and perpetrator) of attacks, robberies, muggings and sexual assaults.

*In a significant proportion of rape and sexual assault cases – in some studies up to 81% – the victim has been drinking before the assault.*

Alcohol can, and frequently does, cause a person to lose all common sense when it comes to their own safety – How often have you woken up the morning after you've been drinking and cringed at the risks you took the previous night?

And you don't have to be 'really drunk' for alcohol to affect your judgement. Even a few drinks can make you take risks you would not otherwise have taken.

Statistically it is young men who are most at risk of becoming the victim of crime, yet most men consider women to be more vulnerable than them and take fewer precautions.

*This leaflet is not about telling you to stop drinking but about how to avoid becoming a victim when you do drink.*

[www.alcoholconcern.org.uk](http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk)

# PERSONAL SAFETY

Personal Safety is our ability to go about our everyday life without fear or threat of violence or aggression. There is a great deal that we can do as individuals to increase our safety and reduce the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime.

## HOW CAN ALCOHOL AFFECT YOUR SAFETY?

- Alcohol is a mind-altering drug, which affects our physical co-ordination and decision making abilities.
- Some people are more vulnerable than others to the immediate effects of alcohol due to factors such as body size, gender, genetics and when they last ate.
- Too much alcohol makes you more prone to accidents.
- The more drinks you have the greater the effect – this is true regardless of your age, gender or size.
- Alcohol can help to reduce sexual inhibitions – although this can seem like a good thing, in the wrong situation it can have disastrous results.

***STAYING ON TOP OF YOUR DRINKING WILL HELP YOU TO CONTROL RISKY OR DIFFICULT SITUATIONS***

**[www.suzylamplugh.org](http://www.suzylamplugh.org)**

# PLAN

When you are drinking, your ability to gauge the safety of a situation and to take appropriate action is going to be reduced. The best way to have a great time and to keep safe is to plan ahead.

## PREPARE

- Before going out know how you are getting home and make arrangements in advance such as booking a licensed taxi/lift. Find out from the company the make and model of car to expect.
- Know where you are going and if possible make sure someone else knows where you are going too.
- Make sure your mobile is charged and has credit. Do you have a licensed taxi number stored in your phone?
- Remember to keep enough cash for your journey home and keep your keys separate from your bag.

## LOOK CONFIDENT

- Perpetrators are less likely to attack someone who appears confident and aware of their surroundings (Remember someone clearly under the influence of alcohol inevitably looks more vulnerable).

# ACT TO AVOID RISK

- Stay in control of your drinking – Remember that you are much more vulnerable when you're drunk and some people are prepared to take advantage of this – whether by pinching your bag or wallet or coming on to you inappropriately.
- Alcohol dulls your instincts and awareness of danger.
- Think twice before accepting drinks from someone you don't know well.
- Watch your drink being poured and do not leave it unattended. That way no one can spike it or add more alcohol to it.
- Avoid picking up cab cards in bars and clubs as these could be bogus illegal cabs.
- Don't accept lifts from cruising cabs or touts – these are illegal.
- Try and travel home with a friend.
- If you are travelling alone on public transport, always choose to sit in carriages with other people or downstairs on buses.

- Try hard not to fall asleep on public transport – it makes you vulnerable to theft or assault and you could end up stranded miles from home. Standing rather than sitting may help you stay awake.
- Try not to give away too much personal information about yourself to new acquaintances.
- Make choices that ensure you are always aware of your surroundings, such as not taking short cuts and not walking along the street wearing headphones or talking on your mobile phone.

## NEVER ASSUME

- Don't assume that it will never happen to you; such complacency can put you at risk.
- Never assume that people are what they seem. Appearances can be deceptive.
- Social activity can often be part of the working week. It is easy to assume that if you are with a colleague you must be safe. However, colleagues are often casual acquaintances and therefore unknown to an extent.
- Trust your instincts; they are there to warn you of danger.

# STAY ON TOP OF YOUR DRINKING

## Top tips for safer drinking

- 1 Eat before you go out, or earlier in the evening, to reduce the effects of alcohol.
- 2 Drinking in rounds often means you drink more. Skip some rounds or opt for a soft drink instead.
- 3 Pace yourself. Slow down and take smaller sips.
- 4 Don't save up your weekly allowance and cram it all into one evening.
- 5 Don't mix alcohol with drugs – it can be deadly.
- 6 Decide how many units you want to drink in an evening – and stick with it (see page 13).
- 7 Reduce your units by choosing drinks that are not so strong.
- 8 Avoid 'top-ups' so you can keep track of how much you're drinking .
- 9 Be aware that many pub measures are very large – you may be drinking more units than you intend to.





[www.alcoholconcern.org.uk](http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk)

# DATING & SEX

If you are out on a date with someone new it is wise to consider how to keep yourself safe:

- Make sure someone knows who you are meeting and where.
- Have an exit strategy ready (such as a friend calling you an hour into the date).
- Remember alcohol is the most common date rape drug.
- Alcohol affects your behaviour and the messages you give out.
- Be clear whether or not you are up for sex and don't let your alcohol level impact on this decision.
- If sex is on the agenda, you need to consider if you are comfortable going to their home, especially if you do not know them well. Think carefully about taking someone to your home and remember that if you do they will know where you live in the future.
- Do not drink so much that you are unable to say **NO**.
- Remember to use a condom.

# VIOLENCE & ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Alcohol plays a significant role in many situations where violence or antisocial behaviour occurs. How to protect yourself:

- Don't feel under pressure to drink until you are drunk.
- Be aware that when drunk you may appear threatening to others – which in turn may impact on how they behave towards you.
- Avoid violence by talking your way out of potentially aggressive situations and avoid using aggressive body language or verbal communication.
- Don't flash your mobile around in public (81% of mobile phone theft victims are young men).
- Be aware that however much you feel able to look after yourself no-one should attempt to compete with weapons or gangs. If you find yourself in this situation, get away as fast as you can.
- An estimated 23,000 alcohol-related incidents take place in Britain each week. Regular visitors to pubs and bars are twice as likely to be victims of assault.

# IF YOU FEEL AT **RISK**

## **IN A PUBLIC PLACE:**

- Speak to the aggressor calmly but assertively and make your feelings clear.
- Try diversion techniques such as doing something unexpected that will catch the person off guard.
- Use your voice to make lots of noise, and shout a specific instruction such as 'Get Away'.
- Carry a personal attack alarm to disorientate an attacker long enough to give you time to get away.
- It is important that you appear to be in control of the situation. Too much alcohol will reduce your ability to be able to do this.

## **ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

- Move to a seat nearer the driver or nearer other people.
- If challenged or threatened, respond with assertiveness but not aggression.
- Pull the emergency alarm to get help.

## **IN A CAR:**

- Ask the driver to stop at a cash point or wait till the car stops at traffic lights and get out.
- If they refuse to stop, make a noise, bang on windows and try to draw attention to yourself.

# ALCOHOL THE FACTS

Counting alcohol units can help you keep track of how much you're drinking. The list below shows the approximate number of units of alcohol in common drinks:

- A pint of ordinary strength lager or beer (eg Carling) = 2.3 units
- A pint of strong lager (e.g. Stella Artois) = 3 units
- A 440ml can of strong lager = 2.2 unit.
- A pint of ordinary strength cider (e.g. Dry Blackthorn) = 3 units
- A standard 175ml glass of wine = 2 units
- A large 250ml glass of wine = 3 units
- A small (25ml) measure of spirits = 1 unit
- A large (35ml) measure of spirits = 1.5 units
- A 275 ml bottled alcopop (e.g. Smirnoff Ice, Bacardi Breezer, WKD) = 1.5 units.

The Department of Health advises that men should not drink more than 3-4 units of alcohol per day, and women should drink no more than 2-3 units of alcohol per day.

**DRINK RESPONSIBLY AND  
DON'T DRINK TO GET DRUNK**

[www.alcoholconcern.org.uk](http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk)

# HELP

If you are raped or sexually assaulted, whether you are male or female, it can be difficult to speak out and ask for help. Only you can decide if you want to report a sexual crime to the police. If you do, they will make sure you get as much support as possible, as well as doing their utmost to investigate the crime.

Whether or not you feel able to go to the police, it is important to know that a sexual assault is not your fault, that it can affect how you feel for a long time, and that you don't have to cope with it on your own.

## Other useful contacts:

[www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

for general information about sexual violence or email [sexual.offences@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sexual.offences@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)

[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk) or  
0845 30 30 900

for free confidential support to help anyone deal with an experience of crime

[www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org)

to report a crime anonymously

[www.rapecrisis.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk)

advice to victims of rape

[www.suzylamplugh.org](http://www.suzylamplugh.org)





## The **SUZY LAMPLUGH** Trust

The Leading Authority on Personal Safety

Is the national charity for personal safety working across the UK to assist people to live safer lives.

If you want further advice on how to improve your personal safety in general, contact:

**The Suzy Lamplugh Trust**

**Tel: 02088760305**

**e-mail: [info@suzylamplugh.org](mailto:info@suzylamplugh.org)**

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust can supply a range of resources and guidance leaflets covering all aspects of personal safety. Visit the web site to find out more at [www.suzylamplugh.org](http://www.suzylamplugh.org)



## Alcohol Concern

Making Sense of Alcohol

Is the national agency on alcohol misuse. We work to reduce alcohol related harm and improve the quality of services for problem drinkers and their families.

If you think your drinking regularly puts your personal safety at risk, you might want to take steps to cut back. You can do your own self assessment on the following website:

**[www.howsyourdrink.org.uk](http://www.howsyourdrink.org.uk)**

For leaflets and information on local alcohol counselling services

**Tel: 020 7922 8667** or

**e-mail: [info@alcoholconcern.org.uk](mailto:info@alcoholconcern.org.uk)**

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