

A guide for counting your drinks.

It can be difficult to keep track of how much alcohol you are consuming because different types of drinks contain different amounts of alcohol. A drink often contains more than one ‘standard drink’ due to the way it is served or packaged. This fact sheet provides a guide on the common types of alcohol and how they’re served, the number of standard drinks in a serving or container of alcohol, and typical alcohol volume of each drink.

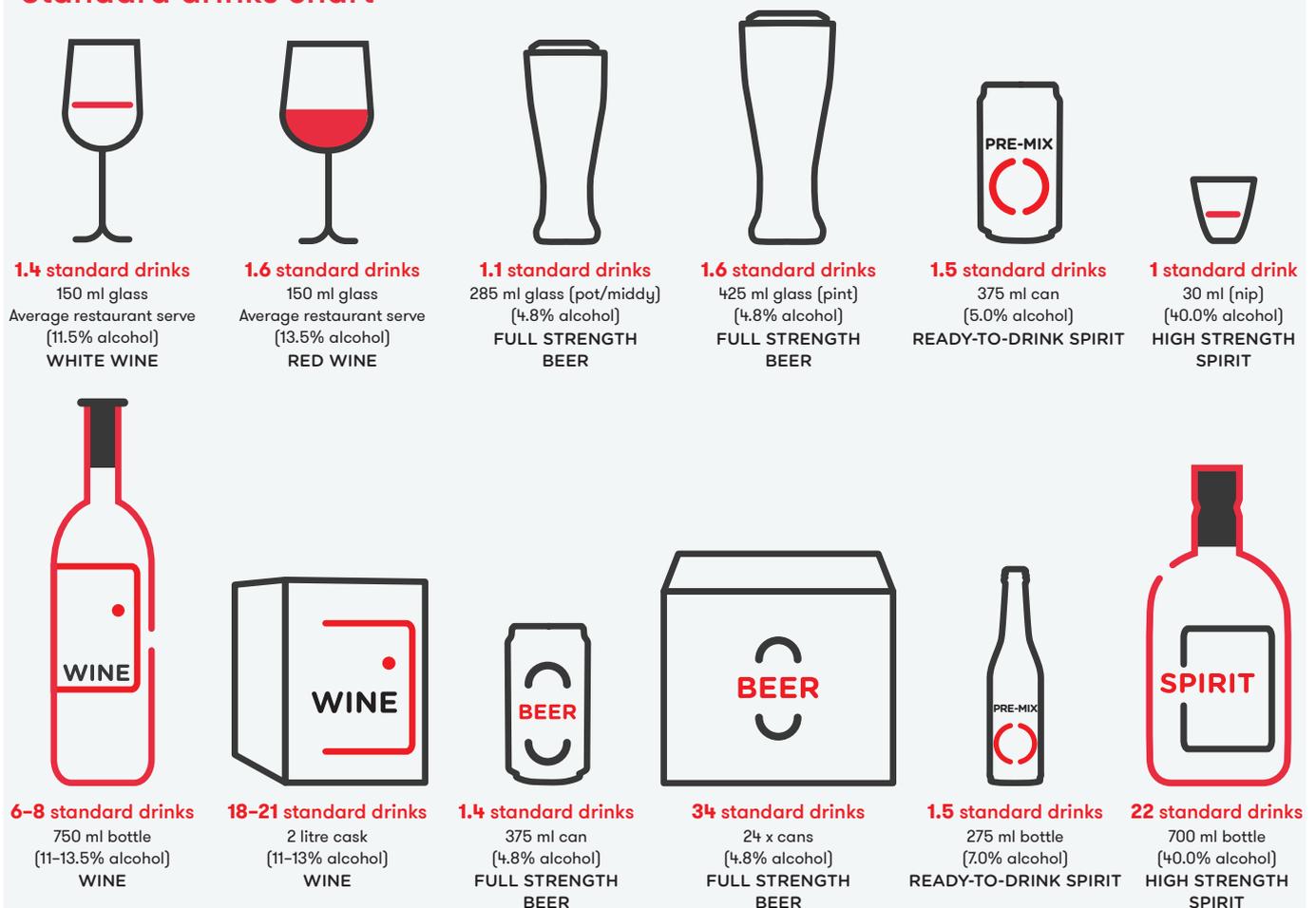
An Australian standard drink contains 10g of alcohol (12.5ml of pure alcohol)

The *Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol* (the Guidelines) define low-risk drinking as no more than two standard drinks on any day, or four standard drinks on any one occasion, to reduce the risk of alcohol-related harm over a lifetime¹. This is based on evidence which shows that the less someone drinks in a single occasion, and if they drink weekly rather than daily, they significantly reduce their risk of ill health or injury over their lifetime.

Why it’s difficult to keep track of how much you’re drinking

- Glass sizes are not the same in different places
- Different types of drinks contain different amounts of pure alcohol
- Sometimes drinks are mixed with unknown quantities of alcohol, such as in cocktails and alcoholic punches
- Sometimes jugs and casks are shared
- Glasses may be ‘topped up’ before they are empty
- It can be difficult to remember what you’ve had to drink.

Standard drinks chart



Serving drinks

Whether you drink at a venue or in a private setting, it is quite common for a serve of alcohol to contain more than one standard drink. Keep in mind that:

- Hotels, pubs and other venues often serve drinks to a specific glass size, which can contain more than one standard drink
- Most wine glasses can hold more than one standard drink
- Drinks poured at home often contain more alcohol than a standard drink unless you specifically measure it
- Sometimes drinks, such as alcoholic cocktails and punches, are mixed with unknown quantities of alcohol.

Effects on your health

Drinking more than the Guidelines recommend can have a harmful effect on your health.

- Short-term risks include hangovers, headaches, nausea, shakiness, vomiting, memory loss, falls and injury, assaults, car accidents and accidental death.
- Long-term risks can include cancer, cirrhosis of the liver, brain damage, memory loss and sexual dysfunction.
- Excessive alcohol use can also affect many other areas of life, including family, work and personal relationships.

If you're worried about your drinking, see your doctor or call DrugInfo on 1300 85 85 84 for free confidential information and advice.

References

1. National Health and Medical Research Council [NHMRC]. (2009). *Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol*. Canberra: NHMRC.

Additional Information

NHMRC Guidelines • www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/ds10-alcohol.pdf

Drug Facts: Alcohol • adf.org.au/drug-facts/alcohol

Information about treatment • adf.org.au/alcohol-drug-use/supporting-a-loved-one/treatment

Support Services

DrugInfo • 1800 85 85 84

ADF's free, confidential phone service, providing information and referral for alcohol and other drugs.

DirectLine • 1800 888 236

Free, confidential service offering over the phone counselling, support and referral (24 hours, 7 days a week).

ADF Help and Support Services Directory • adf.org.au/help-support/support-services-directory



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