

# Alcohol consumption questions and the Fast Alcohol Screening Test (FAST)

2

## Consumption questions

Get a clear picture of what the person normally drinks in a week by asking what they drink and in what quantities. The Drinks Calculator will help you work out:

a) average number of units consumed per week



b) units consumed on the heaviest drinking day in the last week

No. of units

## FAST questions

Record the scores in the boxes on the right.

**1**  **How often do you have:** **6 or more units on one occasion?** **OR** **8 or more units on one occasion?** 

Never **0**    Less than monthly **1**    Monthly **2**    Weekly **3**    Daily or almost daily **4**

**Score**

If the response to this question is 'Never', the person is **at low risk** for alcohol-related problems, but bear in mind the drinking limits.

If the response to this question is 'Less than monthly' or 'Monthly', go on to ask the questions in **Steps 2, 3 and 4.**

If the response to this question is 'Weekly' or 'Daily or almost daily', the person is a risky (hazardous), harmful or dependent drinker.

**2** **How often during the last year have you been unable to remember what happened the night before because you had been drinking?**

Never **0**    Less than monthly **1**    Monthly **2**    Weekly **3**    Daily or almost daily **4**

**Score**

**3** **How often during the last year have you failed to do what was normally expected of you because you had been drinking?**

Never **0**    Less than monthly **1**    Monthly **2**    Weekly **3**    Daily or almost daily **4**

**Score**

**4** **In the last year, has a relative, friend, GP or health worker been concerned about your drinking or suggested that you cut down?**

No **0**    Yes, on one occasion **2**    Yes, on more than one occasion **4**

**Score**

Add up the scores to the above questions and record below.  
The minimum score is 0 and the maximum score is 16.

Total score:  **The score for hazardous drinking is 3 or more.**

# Practitioner guidance notes

## Consumption questions

To accurately assess what a patient drinks in a week and to help answer question 1 of FAST, it is recommended that you ask the patient what they usually drink in a week, and in what quantities. This will help you to establish how many units of alcohol they typically consume in a week and how many units they consumed on their heaviest drinking day in the last week. You may find it useful to use the Drinks Calculator to work out consumption in terms of units of alcohol. The Units of alcohol sheet (sheet 5) and the box below also give examples of units of alcohol in some typical drinks. Record the information in the boxes on the reverse of this sheet. This will also assist with ABI data reporting and will provide a measure at follow-up appointments, if offered, to assess whether the patient has cut down their drinking.

## Fast Alcohol Screening Test (FAST)

FAST is for the detection of probable hazardous drinking.

**Once you have asked the appropriate questions give the patient feedback on the results of screening:**

- It might be helpful to describe the result of their screening in terms of risk in relation to drinking limits.
- Explain what this means for the individual, e.g. risks to their health and general wellbeing.
- Give clear advice and emphasise personal responsibility.
- Finish by asking how they feel about the information or about finding out more.


If the patient scores 3 or more it is appropriate to carry on delivering an alcohol brief intervention – see Stages of an alcohol brief intervention (sheet 1) for the next steps in delivering a brief intervention.


## Alcohol dependence?


If, from the answers given to the consumption questions and question 1 of FAST, you have reason to believe a patient is (or may be) dependent on alcohol, they should be thoroughly assessed. Some practitioners will choose to carry out this assessment themselves, while others will prefer to refer the patient to a specialist service for assessment.


**Brief interventions are not recommended for those who may be alcohol dependent.**


### Units of alcohol


 1 pint of normal-strength beer/lager/cider (568ml)  
**4% abv =**  
**2.2 units of alcohol**


 Bottle of medium-strength lager (330ml)  
**5% abv =**  
**1.7 units of alcohol**


 1 pint of strong beer/lager/cider (568ml)  
**6.5% abv =**  
**3.6 units of alcohol**

 Alcopop (275ml)  
**5% abv =**  
**1.4 units of alcohol**

 Can of super-strength lager (440ml)  
**9% abv =**  
**4 units of alcohol**

 Standard glass of wine (175ml)  
**12.5% abv =**  
**2.2 units of alcohol**

 Large glass of wine (250ml)  
**12.5% abv =**  
**3.1 units of alcohol**

 Bottle of wine (75cl)  
**12.5% abv =**  
**9.4 units of alcohol**