

Clinical Psychology Associates of North Central Florida

Providing quality psychological and neuropsychological assessment, treatment and consultation services to the North Central Florida community.

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Binge Drinking

The [National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism \(NIAA\)](#) defines binge drinking as a pattern of drinking that brings a person's Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) to 0.08 grams percent or above. For men this equals 5 or more drinks in two hours and for women 4 or more drinks in two hours.

A drink is usually measured as:

- 12 ounces regular beer or wine cooler
- 8 ounces malt liquor
- 5 ounces wine
- 1.5 ounces 80-proof distilled spirits or liquor (gin, rum, vodka)

While DSM-5 now refers to alcohol problems under the generic term of alcohol use disorder, many professionals continue to draw a distinction between alcohol abuse and alcohol dependence.

Most people who binge drink on occasion are not alcoholics or alcohol dependent. More than 4-5 binge drinking episodes in a month is usually consistent with definitions of alcohol abuse or heavy drinking as defined by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). This is associated with increased likelihood of health, social and occupational consequences.

Drinking no more than 2 drinks per episode for men and 1 per women per episode is usually considered "safe" for most people. For people taking medication or with other health conditions limits may be even lower.

Acute effects of a binge may include but are not limited to personality and mood changes, increased risk-taking, aggression, tremors, increased blood pressure, and early morning awakening. This is not entirely benign, every year one or more high school athletes with underlying cardiac conditions will die when under the stress of practice or a game after a night of bingeing.

Obviously binge drinking can easily take one over the safe and legal limits for safe driving. Alcohol-related driving deaths remain a leading cause of death for late teens and young adults.