

What is binge drinking?

There is no standard definition of what constitutes 'binge' drinking. However, it is commonly understood to mean levels of drinking at risk or high risk for short term harm. Binge drinking (drinking to get drunk) is drinking heavily over a short period of time, or drinking continuously over a number of days or weeks. A person who binge drinks may usually have restrained drinking habits, but may frequently overindulge to an extreme level. Heavy binge drinking can lead to alcohol poisoning.

The rate of binge

Binge drinking is most common among 14– 24 year olds.

Some common definitions of binge drinking or of a binge drinker are:

- getting smashed
- drinking to get drunk - a 'bender'
- occasional bouts of heavy drinking by young and/or non dependent people
- intermittent, or irregular, episodes of excessive drinking
- a person who is normally restrained in their drinking habits but who, at frequent intervals, overindulges to a marked degree.

Binge drinking can be immediately and directly harmful to the drinker's and others' health. For example risky behaviour or assault and can expose the drinker and others to risk of injury, or even death (short term harms). Research indicates that binge drinking can also have long lasting effects on a drinker's health and wellbeing (long term harms).

