



Managing Alcohol Risk

There are two approaches . . .

There two approaches to managing alcohol risk: *harm avoidance* and *harm reduction*.

Harm Avoidance

The harm avoidance approach is based on abstinence - the total avoidance of alcohol. For many people, alcohol creates such significant problems in their life that abstinence is the preferred method to avoid problems, reduce risk and achieve life goals. This is a major step, but for many it's the most straightforward method to deal with alcohol-related problem behavior.

Harm Reduction

The harm reduction approach, by contrast, allows people to continue using alcohol while attempting to reduce risk of alcohol-related problem behavior. Harm reduction involves identifying higher risk situations and behaviors while developing coping strategies that reduce risk while continuing to use alcohol. This approach is based on the reality that human beings are willing to accept levels of risk. For example, there is risk driving automobiles; flying in airplanes; swimming; eating, etc. In these situations, we know the risk and continue the behavior. We engage in risky activities as we attempt to manage the risk. We assume that the odds are in our favor and we will not be negatively affected or damaged.

The challenge in managing alcohol risk is making an honest determination as to which approach works best for each individual. The following questions are designed to help assess alcohol risk and point people in the direction of either harm avoidance or harm reduction.

Alcohol Use Assessment

Place a check in front of the item if the item describes your behavior.

- Do you sometimes feel uncomfortable when you have to be somewhere where no alcohol will be available?
- Has your drinking led to conflicts with friends or family members?
- Do you have a tendency to say or do things you later regret when you have been drinking?
- Have you ever hidden alcohol from those close to you so that they'll not know how much you are using?
- Have you noticed an increased desire to drink more alcohol in order to relax or "catch a buzz?"
- During your day, do you look forward to drinking when you get home?
- Does alcohol help you socialize, engage people, banish shyness or bolster self-confidence?
- Does alcohol help you deal with stress or boredom, escape or blot out bad memories?
- Have you driven a car while intoxicated?
- Have you received more than one DUI citation?
- Do you drink to get buzzed or to the point of intoxication while alone?
- Have you had financial, work, family or legal problems at a time when you've been drinking more than usual?
- Do you ever wake up the morning with no memory of what you were doing when drinking? Have family or friends told you about things you said or did when drinking and you can't remember what happened?
- Have you had the "shakes" and find that it helps to have a drink to calm your nerves?
- Has a family member or friend ever expressed concern about your alcohol use?
- Have you ever felt the need to cut down on the amount of alcohol you use?
- After cutting down on the amount of alcohol that you use, have you returned to the amount previously used?
- Have you ever said to yourself "I can stop drinking whenever I want to, I've stopped many times?"
- Have you ever felt guilty about anything he said or did when drinking?

If you checked three or more of these items, you may be at higher risk. Alcohol abuse, using alcohol to a self-harming level, may not require abstinence. You may contact **DIRECTION EAP (541-345-2800 or 1-866-293-4327)** to discuss alcohol use and potential strategies that prevent alcohol-related problem behavior.