



**Alcohol  
Use**  
QUESTIONNAIRE

# Alcohol Use – QUESTIONNAIRE

Please circle the answer most relevant to you

1. How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?

NEVER	MONTHLY OR LESS	TWO TO FOUR TIMES A WEEK	TWO OR THREE TIMES A WEEK	FOUR OR MORE TIMES A MONTH
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2. How many drinks containing alcohol do you have on a typical day when you are drinking?

1 or 2	3 or 4	5 or 6	7 to 9	10 or more
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3. How often during the past year have you found that you were not able to stop drinking once you had started?

NEVER	LESS THAN MONTHLY	MONTHLY	WEEKLY	DAILY, OR ALMOST DAILY
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4. How often during the past year have you failed to do what was normally expected of you because of drinking?

NEVER	LESS THAN MONTHLY	MONTHLY	WEEKLY	DAILY, OR ALMOST DAILY
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5. Has a relative or friend, doctor or other health worker been concerned about your drinking or suggested you cut down?

NO	YES, BUT NOT IN THE PAST YEAR	YES DURING THE PAST YEAR
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## ALCOHOL USE QUESTIONNAIRE

### Background

1. Alcohol misuse is estimated to be present in about 6% of primary carers, ranking it third in frequency behind major depression and generalised anxiety. Higher rates are found in certain localities, particularly amongst parents known to Social Services Departments.
2. Drinking alcohol affects different individuals in different ways. For example, some people may be relatively unaffected by the same amount of alcohol that incapacitates others.
3. The primary concern therefore is not the amount of alcohol consumed but how it impacts on the individual, and more particularly on their role as a parent.
4. Drinking alcohol can affect a carer's behaviour towards their partner or children, even if their alcohol consumption is within the Department of Health's guidelines for safe drinking. This may be particularly true if the parent has a vulnerable personality.
5. Drinking alcohol may contribute to incidents where there is loss of temper or parental rows. Deep sleep due to alcohol may reduce the parents' awareness of distress in young children at night.
6. Children of parents who misuse alcohol are more likely to have: developmental delays, social problems, emotional detachment, and delinquency.
7. Research has found that individuals who misuse alcohol are more likely to have a parent or relative who misused alcohol.
8. Children of alcoholics are reported to abuse alcohol or drugs more than children who have grown up with non-alcoholics, and are 2–4 times more likely to have a psychiatric disorder.

### The Questionnaire

9. This questionnaire has been found to be effective in detecting adults with alcohol disorders and those with hazardous drinking.
10. The questionnaire is designed to be self administered. Research has found that adults may be more honest in completing this type of questionnaire than in a face-to-face interview.
11. The questionnaire can be scored (see overleaf), but **should be viewed primarily as a tool** to help to raise the subject of alcohol, and to provide the opportunity to address any issues that may arise, particularly in the responses to questions 3, 4 and 5.
12. The questionnaire covers:
  - Frequency of alcohol consumption (question 1)
  - Number of drinks consumed in a typical day (question 2)
  - Ability to control drinking (question 3)
  - Failure to carry out expected tasks as consequence of the effects of alcohol (question 4)
  - Whether others are concerned about the individuals drinking (question 5)

### Use

13. The questionnaire can be useful to provide a baseline, either at initial or core assessment or during ongoing work.
14. The questionnaire can help to detect drinking issues in circumstances where alcohol problems are not suspected. Drinking habits are often hidden, even from other family members.
15. It is important that the questionnaire is used as a basis for discussion of drinking patterns. For example, it may be useful to explore with carers how they manage their children when they are drinking. If they go the pub – what happens to the children?
16. Where the worker is uncertain how to interpret the response to the questionnaire they should consult a professional who is experienced in this field.

## Administration

17. The introduction of the questionnaire will have to be carefully planned, particularly with carers from communities where the use of alcohol is frowned upon. One approach is to explain that it is important to understand families' approach to drinking alcohol, and that asking parents to fill out a questionnaire can be a useful starting point for discussion. It can be emphasised that the worker is not for or against drinking, but from the children's point of view it is helpful to know what part it plays in day to day family life.
18. Although designed to be self-administered, the questionnaire can also be used as a series of initial probes for use by the worker.

## Scoring

- Question 1:** Never = 0, Monthly or less = 1, Two to four times a week = 2, Two or three times a week = 3, Four or more times a week = 4
- Question 2:** 1 or 2 = 0, 3 or 4 = 1, 5 or 6 = 2, 7 to 9 = 3, 10 or more = 4
- Question 3:** Never = 0, Less than monthly = 1, Monthly = 2, Weekly = 3, Daily or almost daily = 4.
- Question 4:** Never = 0, Less than monthly = 1, Monthly = 2, Weekly = 3, Daily or almost daily = 4.
- Question 5:** No = 0, Yes, but not in the past year = 2, Yes during the past year = 4.

## Interpretation of Scoring

1. A score of 5 or more indicates that there may be an alcohol problem, and that there should be fuller evaluation. It needs to be remembered that although people may be more honest filling in a questionnaire than face to face, they are still likely to underestimate consumption and effects.
2. If questions 3, 4 or 5 are checked as other than *No* or *Never* there is likely to be concern that the pattern of drinking may be having an impact on the children.
3. Interpretation may be helped by looking at the Department of Health guidelines.

### **The Department of Health guidelines for safe drinking state that:**

**For men**, drinking between 3 and 4 units a day or less indicates no significant risk to health (1 unit = approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  a pint of beer, 1 measure of spirit, or 1 glass of wine). Regularly drinking 4 or more units of alcohol a day indicates an increased risk to health.

**For women**, drinking between 2 and 3 units a day or less, indicates no significant risk to health. Regularly drinking over 3 units a day signifies an increased risk to health.

## Reference:

Piccinelli M, Tessari E, Bortolomasi M, Piasere O, Semenzin M, Garzotto N & Tansella M (1997) Efficacy of the alcohol use disorders identification test as a screening tool for hazardous alcohol intake and related disorders in primary care: A validity study. *British Medical Journal*. **514**: 420–424.