

Indications of Alcohol and Drug Related Problems

Appendix B

INDICATIONS OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG RELATED PROBLEMS

There is no single characteristic which identifies a person with an alcohol or drug problem, and indeed alcohol or drugs are only two of many possible reasons for deteriorating job efficiency. However, if the following characteristics occur in combination or as a pattern over a period of time alcohol or drug related problems may be indicated. Referral to occupational Health is advised if an employee routinely demonstrates any of the following behaviours.

1) Absenteeism

- Multiple instances of unauthorised leave
- Excessive sick leave (including frequent self-certified or uncertificated sick leave)
- Frequent Monday and/or Friday absences
- Excessive lateness, e.g. returning late from meal breaks
- Leaving work early
- Increasingly improbable excuses for absence.
- High accident rate at home or at work
- Difficulty in concentrating
- Irregular work patterns
- Alternative periods of high and low productivity
- Increasing general unreliability and unpredictability.

2) Reporting to work under the influence of alcohol or drugs

- Attending work in an obviously inebriated condition
- Smelling of alcohol
- Hand tremors
- Increasingly unkempt appearance
- Lack of personal hygiene.

3) Deteriorating job efficiency

- Missed deadlines
- Mistakes
- Making poor decision

4) Deterioration of relationships at work

- Over-reaction to imagined or real criticism
- Irritability
- Complaints from colleagues
- Borrowing money from colleagues
- Avoidance of Line Manager and/or associates.
- Dishonesty and theft

OTHER POINTS TO CONSIDER

What happens when you drink alcohol?

Alcohol is absorbed into your bloodstream within a few minutes of being drunk and is carried to all parts of your body including the brain.

The concentration of alcohol in the body depends on many factors, principally how much you have drunk, how long you have been drinking, whether you have eaten, size and weight.

It takes a healthy liver approximately 1 hour to break down 1 unit of alcohol (10ml or 8g of absolute alcohol), e.g. a single measure of spirits or a half a pint of beer (4.5%).

Calculating units

The number of units in a drink is based on the size of the drink, as well as its alcohol strength.

ABV is a measure of the amount of pure alcohol as a percentage of the total volume of liquid in a drink. You can find the ABV on the labels of cans and bottles, sometimes written as "vol" or "alcohol volume". For example, wine that says "12% ABV" or "alcohol volume 12%" means 12% of the volume of that drink is pure alcohol.

To calculate how many units there are in any drink by multiplying the total volume of a drink (in ml) by its ABV (measured as a percentage) and dividing the result by 1,000.

strength (ABV) x volume (ml) ÷ 1,000 = units

For example, to work out the number of units in a pint (568ml) of strong lager (ABV 5.2%):

5.2 (%) x 568 (ml) ÷ 1,000 = 2.95 units

Safe Drinking

Men and women are advised not to consume more than 14 units per week on a regular basis.

Spread your drinking over 3 or more days if you regularly drink as much as 14 units a week.

14 units is equivalent to 6 pints of average strength beer or 10 small glasses of low strength wine.

Hazardous Drinking

Women: Drinking more than 14 units a week, but less than 35 units a week.

Men: Drinking more than 14 units a week, but less than 50 units a week.

Harmful High Risk Drinking

Women: more than 35 units per week

Men: more than 50 units per week

Binge Drinking

Men: 8 units of alcohol in one drinking episode

Women: 6 units of alcohol in one drinking episode

Examples of Units Contained in Alcoholic Drinks

Single shot of spirit (25ml, ABV 40%) – 1 unit

Small glass of wine (125ml, ABV 12%) - 1.5 units

Bottle of lager/beer/cider (330 ml, ABV 5%) – 1.7 units

Can of lager/beer/cider (440ml, ABV 5.5%) – 2 units

Pint of low strength lager/beer/cider (ABV 3.6%) – 2 units

Standard glass of wine (175ml, ABV 12%) – 2.1 units

Pint of higher strength lager/beer/cider (ABV 5.2%) – 3 units

Large glass of wine (250ml, ABV 12%) – 3 units

Spirits. Large (35ml) single measure of spirits - 1.4 units