What you need to know

- If you have had a haemorrhagic stroke, you must not drink alcohol for at least three weeks after your stroke.
- Drinking too much alcohol contributes to a number of risk factors for stroke, including high blood pressure.
- Alcohol can interfere with the medicine you take to reduce stroke risk.
- Healthy men and women should have no more than two standard drinks a day, and no more than four standard drinks on any one occasion.
- Your doctor can advise when it is safe for you to start drinking alcohol again and how much alcohol it is safe for you to drink.

Diabetes and being overweight also increase your risk of having a stroke. Both of these risk factors are linked to drinking too much alcohol. Alcoholic drinks are high in calories and they do not have any nutritional value. Reducing the amount of alcohol you drink can help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Haemorrhagic stroke and alcohol

A haemorrhagic stroke is caused by a break in the wall of a blood vessel in the brain. If you have had a haemorrhagic stroke, you must not drink alcohol for at least three weeks after your stroke. Ask your doctor when it is safe to start drinking alcohol again.

Drinking alcohol after a stroke

Alcohol could interfere with the medicine you take to reduce your risk of having another stroke. In particular, it can be harmful if you are taking blood-thinning medicine such as Warfarin. Talk to your doctor about whether it is safe to drink alcohol while taking medicine.

Consuming alcohol safely

The National Guidelines for Alcohol Consumption gives advice about safe amounts of alcohol.

For a complete list of fact sheets visit strokefoundation.org.au
Remember, the Guidelines are for healthy people. Talk to your doctor about whether it is safe for you to drink at all, and whether the amounts in the Guidelines are safe for you.

The Guidelines state that healthy men and women should not drink more than two standard drinks on any day. This will reduce the long-term risk of harm from alcohol. Guidelines also say you should not drink more than four standard drinks on one occasion. This will reduce the short-term risk of harm from that occasion, such as falls or accidents.

For spirits with 40 percent alcohol by volume, a standard drink is 30 mls. A 285 ml glass of full-strength beer is 1.1 standard drinks. 100 ml of wine or champagne is approximately one standard drink, however this varies between types. Keep in mind most glasses of wine served in restaurants and pubs are more than 100 ml.

Always check the label on the bottle to find out how many standard drinks you are having.

If you find that you are drinking more than is safe, try these tips:

› Drink water when you are thirsty.
› Sip your drink slowly. Put down the glass after each mouthful.
› At social occasions, make every second drink a non-alcoholic beverage. Choose something like a sparkling water rather than a sugary drink.
› Try low-alcohol alternatives such as light beer.
› Opt out of ‘shouts’. Drink at your own pace. If you cannot avoid buying a round, get yourself a non-alcoholic drink.
› Avoid salty snacks such as potato chips or peanuts. These make you thirsty and more inclined to drink quickly.
› Set goals such as not drinking alone.
› Have at least two days without alcohol each week.
› Do not drink on an empty stomach. A full stomach slows the absorption of alcohol.

Strategies to reduce your drinking

Write down how many drinks you have to see how much and how often you drink.

More help

StrokeLine’s health professionals provide information, advice, support and referral. StrokeLine’s practical and confidential advice will help you manage your health better and live well.

Call 1800 STROKE (1800 787 653).
Email strokeline@strokefoundation.org.au

Join Australia’s largest stroke community for information and support.
enableme.org.au

Talk to your doctor about support to cut down or stop drinking alcohol. Treatment and counselling services are available across Australia by telephone, online or face to face.

DrugInfo can provide information and referral
Call 1300 858 584
druginfo.adf.org.au