

What You Should Know

Socializing with colleagues over a drink or entertaining family, friends or neighbors with food and cocktails are pleasurable pastimes enjoyed by millions of American adults. For those adults who choose to drink, they should do so in moderation and responsibly.

Moderation



Alcohol & Moderation

Distilled Spirits Council
of the United States



distilledspirits.org

drinkinmoderation.org

What is Moderate Drinking?

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, which is the basis for federal nutrition policy and programs in the United States, defines moderate drinking as

“**Limiting intake to 2 drinks or less in a day for men and 1 drink or less in a day for women, when alcohol is consumed.**”

What Counts as a Drink?

According to the *Dietary Guidelines*, one “drink-equivalent” contains 0.6 fluid ounces of alcohol. A drink-equivalent is defined as:

Drink-Equivalent



1.5 fl oz

1.5 fl oz of 80-proof distilled spirits (40% alcohol) such as rum, vodka, gin or whiskey;



5 fl oz

5 fl oz of wine (12% alcohol); or



12 fl oz

12 fl oz of regular beer (5% alcohol).

Since beer, wine and distilled spirits products may come in different sizes and alcohol content, these clearly defined drink-equivalent amounts are intended to serve as a guide to help consumers.

Why are the Guidelines Different for Males and Females?

Most people think the difference is solely based upon body weight, but this is only one factor. Females have less water in their bodies. Therefore, if a female and a male of the same size and weight drink the same amount of alcohol, a female is likely to reach a higher concentration of alcohol in her blood.



Spirits
1.5 fl oz

Wine
5 fl oz

Beer
12 fl oz

One drink-equivalent of distilled spirits is 1.5 fl oz, wine is 5 fl oz and beer is 12 fl oz.

Which Contains More Alcohol per Drink?

Distilled Spirits, Wine or Beer

Each drink-equivalent contains the same amount of a pure alcohol called ethanol (0.6 fluid ounces). Whether it is in distilled spirits, wine or beer: ethanol has the same effect on the body. This scientific fact is a critical aspect of responsible drinking underscored by the federal government, state driver's manuals and consumer groups, such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving. **Remember, when it comes to drinking alcohol, there is no beverage of moderation, only the practice of moderation.**

For more information on the *Dietary Guidelines* for Americans, please visit:

[dietaryguidelines.gov](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov)

Which Contains More Calories per Drink?

Distilled Spirits, Wine or Beer

A 1.5-ounce drink of distilled spirits (40% alcohol) is 98 calories. A 5-ounce drink of wine (12% alcohol) is about 120 calories. A 12-ounce drink of regular beer (5% alcohol) is about 150 calories.* Remember that mixers also contain calories, but sodas, tonics and juices can be substituted with lower- or zero-calorie versions. Garnishes such as apple or orange slices add color and flavor while keeping the calorie count down.

Alcohol Calorie Calculator:

*rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/Tools/Calculators/calorie-calculator.aspx

Are the Potential Benefits and Risks Different Depending on Alcohol Type?

When it comes to potential benefits and risks of alcohol, the health effects are the same for spirits, wine and beer. Scientific research has shown that moderate alcohol consumption is linked with some health benefits, such as reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, and studies show that these associations are attributable to ethanol (i.e., the alcohol that is in all beverage alcohol). Of course, no one should start drinking for potential health benefits, and some individuals should not drink at all. Alcohol abuse can cause serious health and other problems. Even drinking in moderation may pose health risks for some people. Individuals should discuss their alcohol consumption with their physician who can determine what is best for them based on individual risk factors, such as family history, genetics and lifestyle.

Who Should Not Drink?

According to the *Dietary Guidelines*, some individuals should not drink beverage alcohol, including those who are unable to control the amount they drink; anyone younger than the legal drinking age; women who are pregnant or who may be pregnant; individuals taking certain over-the-counter or prescription medications; those with certain medical conditions; or individuals who plan to drive or take part in other activities that require skill, coordination and alertness.