

AUDIT-C score:

Unhealthy alcohol use:

- Score of 4 or greater for men
- Score of 3 or greater for women

If score is in unhealthy range, administer 5 – 15 min. brief counseling using the following script as your guide:

1. Understand the patient's views of use

"I'd like to know more about your alcohol use. Help me to understand what you enjoy about using alcohol? What else?"

"What do you enjoy less about using alcohol? Or regret about your use?"

Summarize: "So, on the one hand, you enjoy alcohol because of _____, and on the other hand you said the downsides are _____."

2. Give information/feedback

"Are you aware of what the recommended safe drinking limits are?"

"It is recommended that men drink no more than 4 drinks in one day and no more than 14 drinks in one week. It is recommended that women drink no more than 3 drinks in one day and 7 drinks in one week. Drinking more than this puts you at risk for experiencing illness or injury from your alcohol use."

"Are you aware of health risks related to your use of alcohol?"

If YES, "Which ones are you aware of?"

If NO, indicate problems:

"Drinking more than the safe drinking limits can lead to alcohol dependence, damage your body's organs and lead to various health concerns. The most common health effects include heart, liver and nerve damage, as well as memory problems and sexual dysfunction. These effects vary considerably from one person to another."

"For women, this damage happens with lower doses of alcohol, because their bodies have lower water content than men. That's why the moderate drinking guidelines for women and men are so different."

Adapted from <https://www.masbirt.org/sites/www.masbirt.org/files/documents/toolkit.pdf>
And <https://newsnetwork.mayoclinic.org/discussion/mayo-clinic-q-and-a-is-daily-drinking-problem-drinking/>

3. Enhance motivation to change

Readiness scale

“Given what we have been discussing, help me better understand how you feel about making a change in your use of alcohol. On a scale from 0 – 10, how ready are you to change any aspect of your use of alcohol? A 10 would mean that you are fully ready to change and a 0 means that you are not at all ready.”

Why did you choose that number and now a lower one like a 1 or a 2? *Client will indicate reasons for change. You can ask for more reasons.* “How does this fit with where you see yourself in the future? If you make these changes what would be different in your life?”

If client answers “0” ask, “What would need to happen to be at a higher number?”

Confidence scale

On a scale from 0-10, how confident do you feel to make these changes? A 10 would mean total confidence and a 0 would mean no confidence at all.”

“What needs to happen for you to feel more confident? What have you successfully changed in the past? How? Could you use these same methods to help you with making these changes?”

4. Give advice and negotiate goal

Give advice

Review concerns, as discussed with patient. Advise abstinence or decrease in use, according to screening and assessment. Give referrals for further assessment, if appropriate.

“Let’s review what we’ve talked about. So you told me that you are drinking approximately ___ drinks a day/week currently and that there are upsides list upsides from #1 and downsides list downsides. Because you are experiencing these downsides from your current drinking pattern, I recommend you reduce your drinking to stay within the safe drinking limits [4/14 men; 3/7 women]. It sounds like you’re [feeling ready or not feeling ready] to make a change right now. You see these positive outcomes if you reduce your drinking: list reasons for change from #3 Readiness. Your whole team here would be happy to support you in making change. Also, if you’re interested, I can refer you for an assessment that is focused on exploring your current relationship to alcohol and making recommendations for you to make healthy changes.”

If client willing, refer for Rule 25.

Negotiate goal

“What can you do to stay healthy & safe? Where do you go from here?”

Plan for follow up. “Let’s check in on our plan the next time we meet.”

5. Close: Thank client. “Thank you for taking the time to discuss this with me and being so open.”

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