

Step 1A: Ask the quantity-frequency questions

ASK	IF THE ANSWER IS	THEN
<p>Weekly Average</p> <p>Multiply the answers to the following two questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On average, how many days a week do you drink alcohol? <input type="text"/> On a typical day when you drink, how many drinks do you have? <input type="text"/> <p>= <input type="text"/></p>	<p>From Men </p> <p>more than 14</p>	<p>From Women </p> <p>more than 7</p>
<p>Daily Maximum</p> <p>What is the maximum number of drinks you had on any given day in the past month? <input type="text"/></p>	<p>more than 4</p>	<p>more than 3</p>

Your patient may be **at risk** for developing alcohol-related problems.

or

go to Step 1B CAGE Questions

Below the cutoffs?

If so, screening can stop here unless patients who drink are (1) pregnant or trying to conceive (they need advice to abstain) or (2) over age 65, frail, or taking medications that interact with alcohol (they may have problems at lower drinking levels and thus may need advice to cut down; see Step 3). Other drinkers below the cutoffs may benefit from reminders that no drinking level is risk free and any drinking can impair driving tasks.

Step 1B: Ask the CAGE questions

- C** Have you ever felt that you should **Cut down** on your drinking?
- A** Have people **Annoyed** you by criticizing your drinking?
- G** Have you ever felt bad or **Guilty** about your drinking?
- E** Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or get rid of a hangover? (**Eye-opener**)

If the answer to any of these questions is “yes,” then ask “Has this occurred during the *past year*?”

IF THE ANSWER IS	THEN
YES to 3 or 4 questions in the past year	Your patient may be alcohol dependent
YES to 1 or 2 questions in the past year	Your patient may have current alcohol-related problems
NO to all questions	Your patient may still be at risk because of the elevated drinking level

If your patient exceeds the screening limits OR answers “yes” to one or more CAGE questions, go to steps 2–4.

Step 2: Assess

- Dependence indicators
- Medical factors
- Behavioral factors
- Family history

Step 3: Advise and assist

- State your concern
- Give your advice
- Gauge patient’s readiness to change
- Negotiate an action plan
 - for **cutting down**: recommend lower limits; set a drinking goal
 - for **abstaining**: refer to an alcohol treatment center (To find local centers, call 1-800-662-HELP or visit <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>.)

Step 4: Arrange followup

- Make plans to monitor patient progress

What is a standard drink?

A standard drink contains about 14 grams (about 0.6 fluid ounces) of pure alcohol. Below are approximate standard drink equivalents.

12 oz. of beer or cooler	8–9 oz. of malt liquor 8.5 oz. shown in a 12-oz. glass that, if full, would hold about 1.5 standard drinks of malt liquor	5 oz. of table wine	3–4 oz. of fortified wine (such as sherry or port) 3.5 oz. shown	2–3 oz. of cordial, liqueur, or aperitif 2.5 oz. shown	1.5 oz. of brandy (a single jigger)	1.5 oz. of spirits (a single jigger of 80-proof gin, vodka, whiskey, etc.) Shown straight and in a highball glass with ice to show level before adding mixer
						
12 oz.	8.5 oz.	5 oz.	3.5 oz.	2.5 oz.	1.5 oz.	1.5 oz.

Note: People buy many of these drinks in containers that hold multiple standard drinks. For example, malt liquor is often sold in 16-, 22-, or 40-oz. containers that hold between two and five standard drinks, and table wine is typically sold in 25 oz. (750 ml.) bottles that hold five standard drinks.

A POCKET GUIDE FOR Alcohol Screening and Brief Intervention

This pocket guide is condensed from the 22-page NIAAA guide, *Helping Patients With Alcohol Problems*. For copies of the full guide or more copies of this card, contact:

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