

IDENTIFYING A STANDARD DRINK

DISCUSSION LEADER'S OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

Good morning my name is _____. Today we will be talking about identifying a standard drink.

The **ground rules** for this discussion are:

- (1) No personal attacks on anyone's opinions
- (2) Allow each participant to express themselves
- (3) Make head calls at your leisure, just don't interrupt the group
- (4) Keep your language clean as not to offend others
- (5) PARTICIPATION BY ALL!!!!!!

Gain Attention

Since college, you've been able to drink anyone under the table, and the Marine Corps hasn't been any different. You walk in the bar and your buddies start firing drinks at you. Their nickname for you is "Water Buffalo" because you can hold liquor like none other, and when you come around they know the party is *really* about to start. You've always had a pretty high tolerance for alcohol and you've noticed that it takes even more liquor to get you buzzed nowadays. You drink at least four or five beers every evening, and you definitely must have at least three drinks at home before you go hang with your buddies from the shop and drink some more. Drinking kind of makes you feel invincible and it seems like people enjoy being around you more when there's some alcohol in your system. You're a pretty big guy, so as long as you stay in shape, you should be good. No harm, no foul.

Key points for the discussion today will be:

- (1) Defining the standard drink
- (2) Describing strategies to prevent alcohol misuse and learning how to intervene if an individual misuses alcohol
- (3) Making low-risk decisions about alcohol

Learning Objective: After this guided discussion, you will know what a standard drink is and help educate your fellow Marines. You will also have a better understanding of strategies to prevent alcohol misuse and low-risk decisions you can make about drinking. Finally, you will be equipped with steps for intervening when someone is misusing alcohol.

DISCUSSION

When it comes to alcohol consumption, there are a lot of misconceptions. What one person may consider "just a drink," may be something totally different to another person. People believe that learning to "hold" liquor is the best way to combat alcohol abuse and misuse. The truth of the matter is that needing to drink increasingly larger amounts of alcohol to get a "buzz" or get "high" means you are developing tolerance. Tolerance is actually a warning sign of developing more serious problems with alcohol. It is also a common belief that beer doesn't have as much alcohol as hard liquor. However, a 12-ounce bottle of beer has the same amount of alcohol as a standard shot of 80-proof liquor (either straight or in a mixed drink) or 5 ounces of wine. The information below

will help clarify any misconceptions your Marine may have about the standard drink and its possible effects.

KEY POINT 1

1. What is a standard drink?

A standard drink refers to ½ ounce of pure alcohol in any alcoholic beverage. Beer, wine and distilled spirits all contain the same type and amount of alcohol in a standard serving. Generally, this amount of pure alcohol is found in:

- a) 12 ounces of beer (5% alcohol content)
- b) 8 ounces of malt liquor (7% alcohol content)
- c) 5 ounces of wine (12% alcohol content)
- d) 1.5 ounces or a “shot” of 80-proof (40% alcohol content) distilled spirits or liquor (e.g., gin, rum, vodka, whiskey)

2. Is beer or wine safer to drink than liquor?

No. One 12-ounce beer has about the same amount of alcohol as one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5-ounce shot of liquor. It is the amount of alcohol consumed that affects a person most, not the type of alcoholic drink.

3. What does low-risk drinking mean?

Low-risk alcohol consumption is defined as having up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men. This definition refers to the amount consumed on any single day and is not intended as an average over several days.

4. What is considered high-risk drinking?

- a) Typically, four or more drinks for women and five or more drinks for men—in about 2 hours (binge drinking).
- b) Heavy drinking is binge drinking at least once a week over a 30-day period.
- c) High-risk alcohol use, including underage drinking and binge drinking, can increase a person’s risk of developing serious health problems, including brain and liver damage, heart disease, hypertension, and fetal damage in pregnant women.

5. What kinds of risks are related to quantity and frequency of drinking?

- a) Zero per day: No alcohol-related problems, live longer than people drinking three or more
- b) One or two per day: Does not increase risk for most
- c) More than two per day: Health problems are common, shorter life average—the higher the quantity and frequency above two, the greater the risk
- d) More than three on any day: Higher rates of health and impairment problems

Interim Summary: In this section, we learned what a standard drink is. We also discussed the fact that it is the amount of alcohol consumed—not the type of alcohol— that affects a person. Next, we will discuss how to prevent alcohol misuse and how to intervene when a fellow Marine is misusing alcohol.

KEY POINT 2

What can you do to help prevent alcohol misuse and intervene if a fellow Marine is drinking too much?

1. Know the signs to look for:

- a) Odor of alcohol on the breath
- b) Glazed appearance of the eyes

- c) Gradual deterioration in personal appearance, hygiene, and job performance
 - d) Changes in peer-group associations and friendships
 - e) Frequent intoxication
2. If you're under 21, no drinking is the only low-risk option. Do not drink alcohol underage. If you're under 21 and you choose to drink, you risk serious consequences including NJP.
 3. If you're over 21 and choose to drink, keep your drinking low risk and healthy by taking the following steps:
 - a) Never drink and drive: Plan for a designated driver, carry cash for a cab, and (if available) use the local Marine Corps "Arrive Alive" program as a backup.
 - b) Know and stick to low-risk limits: For men, low-risk drinking is 14 standard drinks spread out over a week (7 days) and never more than 3 standard drinks a day. For women, low-risk drinking is seven standard drinks spread out over a week and no more than two standard drinks a day. If you exceed these low-risk levels, even just occasionally, your chance of experiencing alcohol-related problems increases. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), substance use disorders occur when the recurrent use of alcohol and/or drugs causes clinically significant impairment, including health problems, disability, and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home.
 4. What are some ways to help your fellow Marines maintain low-risk drinking levels?
 - a) Get assistance from others if you see an individual drinking too much.
 - b) Express concern and empathy in a non-judgmental manner, e.g., "I'm worried you are going to hurt yourself."
 - c) Firmly address the drinking, e.g., "I've seen that you had a lot to drink."
 - d) Offer some alternatives, e.g., "Let's sit down together for a little bit. Here's some water/coffee to drink."
 - e) Follow up by checking in and offering assistance.

Interim Summary: In this section, we learned about alcohol misuse prevention and intervention. Next, we will discuss alcohol awareness and the effects of alcohol misuse.

KEY POINT 3

1. A drink is a single shot, a single 12-ounce beer, or about 5 ounces of wine (this is about half of what fills a standard wine glass). Pay attention to the amount of alcohol you're consuming: a mixed drink with two shots equals two drinks.
2. There's a fine line between relaxing with a drink at the end of the day and drinking to avoid dealing with whatever is causing you stress. The risks of drinking are physical dependence, legal consequences, and degraded performance. No one gets smarter when he or she is under the influence. Drinking is a choice.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

Today we discussed how to identify a standard drink. Beer, wine, and spirits all contain the same type and amount of alcohol in a standard serving. Risk for health problems begins at three drinks per day and the risk for impairment begins at more than one drink in an hour or less. The more you drink, the higher your tolerance level. This excessive drinking can eventually lead to alcoholism or addiction.

Closing Statement:

Drinking is a choice. You can choose to drink in an unhealthy way, but that choice comes with serious risks. The objective for today was to increase your awareness of the negative effects of

alcohol misuse as well as provide you with strategies to drink in a low-risk way. We also sought to teach you how to intervene when you see someone drinking too much. The next time you drink, think about what you have learned today and practice low-risk drinking.

END OF DISCUSSION

RESOURCES

1. Marine Corps Order 5300.17, Marine Corps Substance Abuse Program
2. Center for Disease Control and Prevention—<http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/faqs.htm#standDrink>
3. Prevention Research Institute, *Prime for Life Participant Workbook Version 9*
4. SAMHSA—<http://www.samhsa.gov/>