

**TIME FOR A CHANGE**  
**DECISIONAL BALANCE ABOUT USING ALCOHOL**

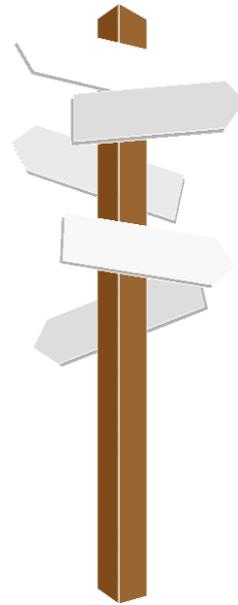
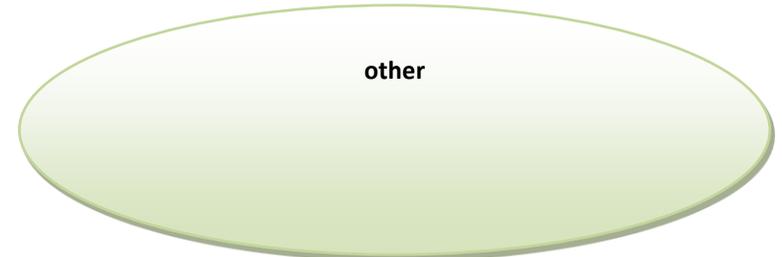
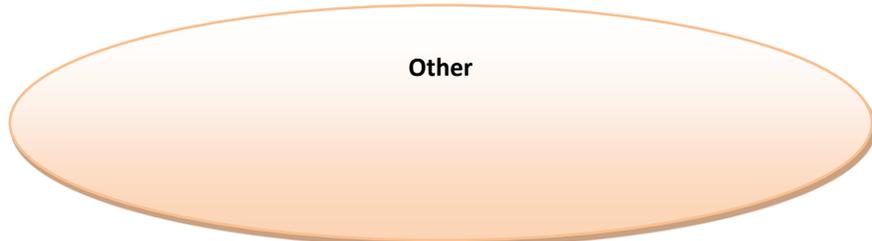
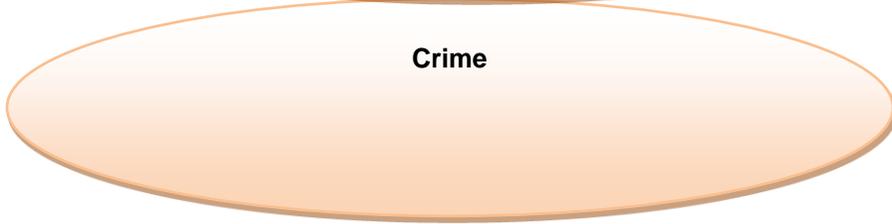
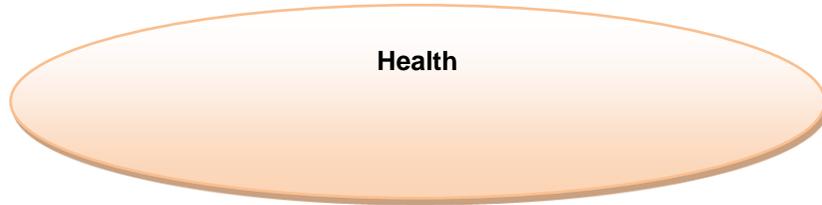
<b>Good things about using alcohol</b>	<b>Not so good things about using alcohol</b>
<b>Difficult things about stopping alcohol use</b>	<b>Good things about stopping alcohol use</b>



# Standing at the Crossroads

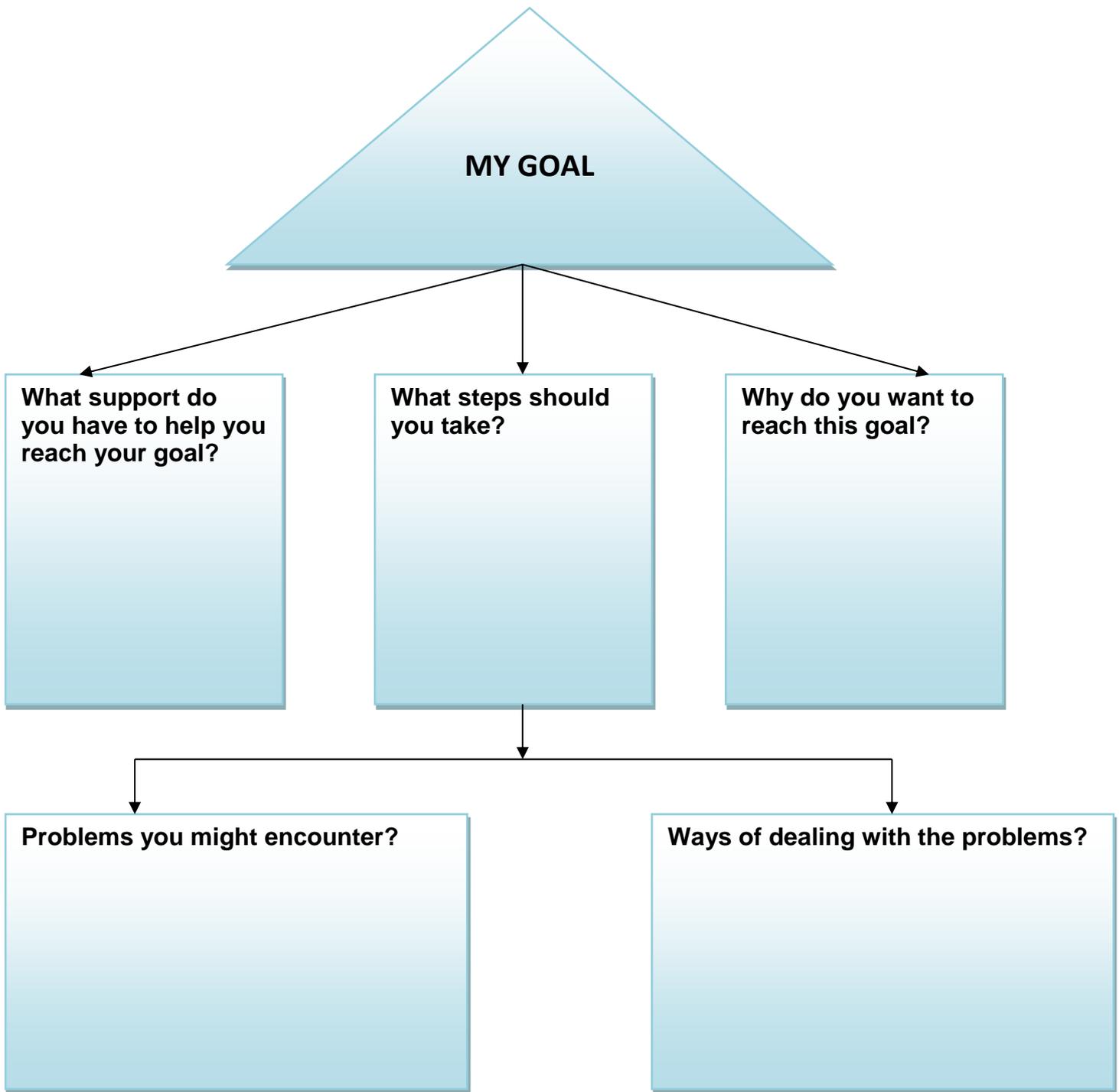
## CONTINUE USING

## STOP USING



**THE CHOICE IS  
YOURS**

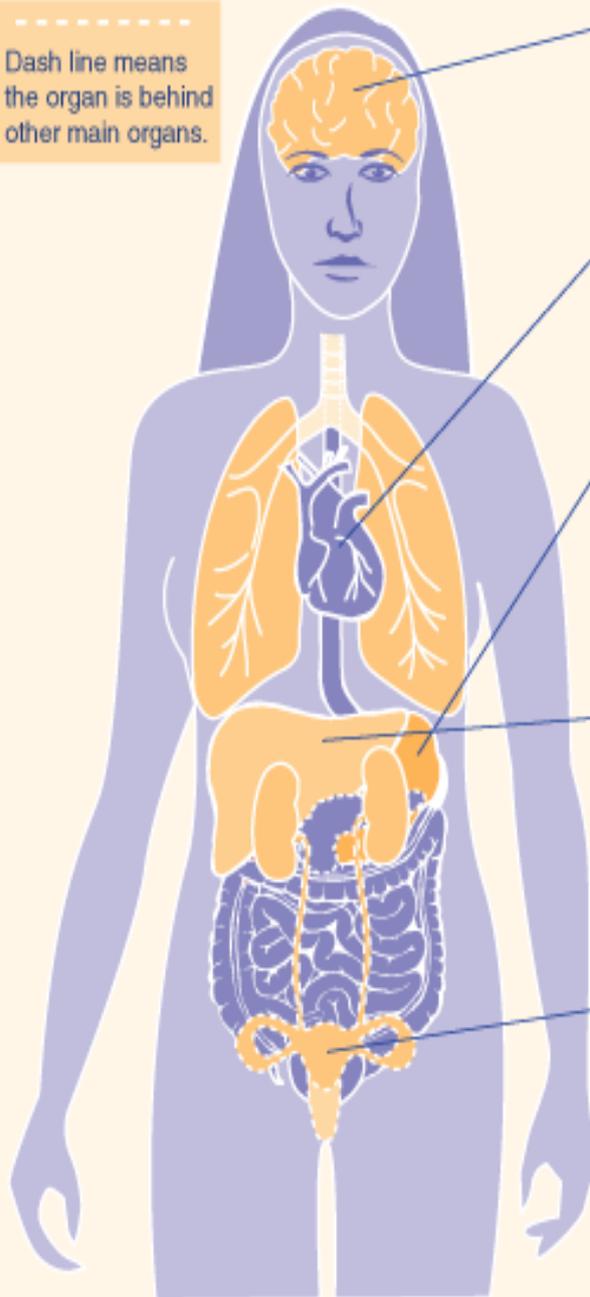




**THE PLANNING ROCKET**

## How Alcohol Affects Your Body

Dash line means  
the organ is behind  
other main organs.



### **Brain**

Drinking alcohol leads to a loss of coordination, poor judgment, slowed reflexes, distorted vision, loss of memory, and even blackouts.

### **Heart**

Drinking alcohol could cause your blood pressure to rise, increase your heart rate, cause your heart to beat abnormally, and can increase the size of your heart.

### **Stomach**

You're putting empty calories into your body, which could cause weight gain. If you drink too much, you may vomit because alcohol is toxic. Drinking alcohol can also cause stomach ulcers and cancer.

### **Liver**

Drinking alcohol could cause diseases such as cirrhosis (sir-o-sis). It also can cause hepatitis (inflamed liver) or even liver cancer, which weakens the liver's ability to clot and keep our blood free from poisons and bacteria.

### **Reproductive System**

Heavy drinking can cause painful periods, heavy flow, discomfort before your period (PMS), and irregular periods (not getting your period when you're supposed to). Drinking also raises the risk of getting sexually assaulted and having unsafe sex.

## THE PERILS OF EXCESSIVE DRINKING

### Brain

Damage to the frontal lobes of the brain, including the cerebellum and cerebral cortex.

### Depression

Heavy alcohol consumption gradually destroys the brain cells, and can result in depression, memory loss and intellectual deterioration.

### Liver Disease

Excessive long term consumption of alcohol may lead to fatty liver, alcoholic hepatitis, cirrhosis and liver cancer.

### Digestive Disorders

Heavy drinkers may suffer from digestive tract diseases, such as gastritis, pancreatitis and cancer of the upper digestive tract.

### Nerve Damage

Malnutrition disturbs nerve functioning, causing symptoms such as cramps and numbness.

### Sexual Problems

Alcohol leads to Erectile Dysfunction (ED) in men and infertility in women.

### Mouth & Throat Cancer

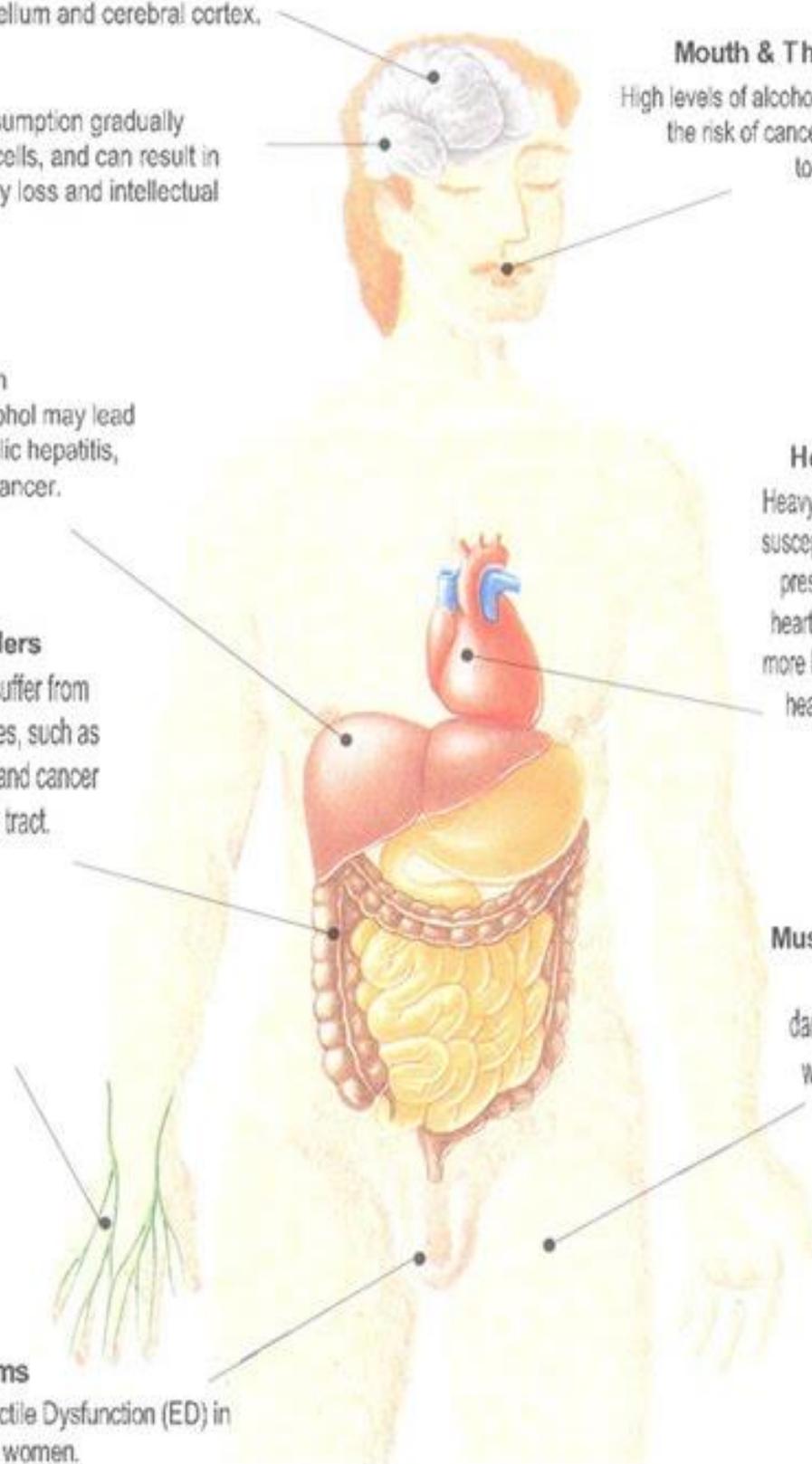
High levels of alcohol intake increase the risk of cancers of the mouth, tongue and throat.

### Heart Disease

Heavy drinkers are more susceptible to high blood pressure and coronary heart disease. They are more likely to suffer from heart failure or stroke.

### Muscle Disease

Heavy drinking damages the red and white muscle fibres.



## Am I putting my health at risk?

[High blood pressure](#), [mouth and throat cancer](#), and [heart attack](#): your chances of suffering these diseases increase if you regularly exceed the [recommended alcohol limits](#) for alcohol. Most people who have health problems from drinking aren't alcoholics – they're just people who've regularly been drinking [more than the NHS advises](#) for some years.

Although there is no completely safe level of drinking, the NHS advises that the risk of harm is low if you don't regularly drink more than the lower risk levels. But for [increasing risk drinkers, the chances rise, and higher risk drinkers face an even greater likelihood of harm](#). So the more you drink, the greater the concern.

- Men could be four times more likely to have [high blood pressure](#)
- Women could be three times more likely to suffer a [stroke](#)
- Everyone could be two to five times more likely to develop [cancers](#) of the mouth and throat

You can read more about 'lower', 'increasing' and 'higher risk' levels in [NHS advice on drinking limits](#).

Most people who are drinking too much don't see any symptoms at first, but alcohol's hidden effects emerge later in life – and by then they can be a serious problem.

## How does alcohol affect your health?

The [effects of alcohol](#) are different for each person, and for men and women. The amount you drink, how often you drink and how long you've been drinking all make a difference. And most of the harm caused can't be seen or felt until it's too late. If you regularly drink more than the NHS advises over a long period you could suffer:

- [Cancer](#) of the mouth, throat cancer, cancer of the oesophagus or larynx, and breast cancer in women
- Increased risk of [heart disease](#) and [stroke](#)
- [Liver damage](#), such as cirrhosis and liver cancer
- [Depression](#), memory loss, brain damage or dementia
- Stomach damage
- Potentially fatal alcohol poisoning

## Tips on cutting down

### **Make a plan**

Before you start drinking, set yourself a limit on how much you're going to drink.

### **Reduce by 10% a day**

Reduce the amount of alcohol you drink by 10% a day

### **Set yourself a budget**

Only take a fixed amount of money to spend on alcohol.

### **On your side**

If you let your friends and family know you're cutting down and that it's important to you, you may get their support.

### **Take it a day at a time**

Try and cut back a little each day – then every day you do is a success.

### **Make it a smaller one**

You can still enjoy a drink but go for smaller sizes. Try bottled beer or a small glass of wine.

### **Have a lower-strength drink**

Cut down the alcohol by swapping a strong beers or wines for ones with a lower strength (ABV in %).

### **Stay hydrated**

Drink a pint of water before you start drinking and avoid using alcohol to quench your thirst – have a soft drink instead.

### **Take a break**

Have the odd day here and there each week when you don't have a drink.

## How many calories in alcohol?

Women should take 2000 calories a day and man 2500 calories

Type of drink	Size	Alcohol by volume (ABV)	Units	Calories (kcal)
Standard glass of wine	175ml	12%	2.1	158
Large glass of wine	250ml	12%	3.0	225
Beer, lager, cider	Pint (568ml)	5.2%	3.0	222
Spirits (neat)	25ml	40%	1.0	50

### **MYTH: Alcohol is a stimulant**

**TRUTH:** Alcohol is a depressant that affects the central nervous system – we all know it can make you sleepy. But because it depresses inhibitions at first, it can make you feel more energetic or cheerful for a period of time. But that means you can also be less able to control your emotions or reactions, and continuing to drink does clearly slow down the way you think, speak, move and react.

### **MYTH: A cold shower/fresh air/hot coffee will sober me up**

**TRUTH:** You might feel less sleepy, but only time will get alcohol out of your body; depending on your weight, it takes about one hour to process one unit of alcohol.

### **MYTH: If I drive extra carefully, I can drink and drive safely**

**TRUTH:** In 2007, alcohol was involved in 18% of all fatal crashes (Department for Transport). Alcohol slows down your reaction times, so even if you think you're in control anything unexpected could cause an accident.

### **MYTH: Drinking makes sex better**

**TRUTH:** Alcohol can help you avoid feeling awkward or can help you feel more confident. But it can keep men from getting or keeping an erection, and it can reduce sex drive. More importantly, you might put yourself in a risky situation or you might not use a condom, putting you at greater risk of a sexually transmitted disease or an unwanted pregnancy.

### **MYTH: The worst thing that can happen is getting my stomach pumped**

**TRUTH:** Alcohol poisoning can kill you. Passing out could lead to inhaling your vomit, resulting in death by asphyxiation. Long-term drinking above NHS-recommended levels can lead to a range of serious health problems and some gradually develop alcohol addiction.

### **MYTH: Beer gets you less drunk**

**TRUTH:** An average pint of beer (ABV 5%), large glass of wine (250ml, ABV 11%) or a 'large' double vodka (70ml, ABV 38 to 40%) all have around 2.8 [units of alcohol](#). This is what makes you drunk chemically, and the faster you drink the full 2.8 units, the higher your peak blood level. But there are a wide range of factors that can affect how drunk you feel including your expectations.

### **MYTH: Switching between beer, wine, and spirits will make you more drunk**

**TRUTH:** Your blood alcohol content is what determines how drunk you are. Mixing drinks may make you sicker by upsetting your stomach, but not more intoxicated.

**MYTH: Lining your stomach with a big meal before you drink will keep you sober**

**TRUTH:** Drinking on a full stomach, or coating your stomach with a greasy or milky solution (like drinking milk before you go out) will delay alcohol getting into your system, not prevent it. However, it is best to eat a proper meal before a night out, especially foods rich in carbohydrates and proteins.

**MYTH: Your body develops a tolerance to alcohol, so you can safely drink more**

**TRUTH:** The more you drink the more damage your body will sustain and the greater the risks become. Tolerance can actually be seen as a warning sign that your body has started to be affected by alcohol.