

How many Calories do these drinks contain?



50ml Brandy
110 Calories



Pint of Ale
**180-230
Calories**



White Wine
(glass)
130 Calories



Bottle of Red
Wine
510 Calories



Pint of Lager
**240-250
Calories**



Medium Glass of Red
Wine
120 Calories



Rum and Coke
142 Calories



Pint of Stout
210 Calories



Bottle of White
Wine **555 Calories**

Did You Get It Right?

Well done if you did. If not, don't be too surprised. Research suggests these are HIDDEN calories, with many people not aware of the calories they are putting on by drinking. Unfortunately, alcohol is sometimes also referred to as EMPTY CALORIES because these calories have no nutritional value. So empty calories are ones we drink unnecessarily. If we're trying to maintain a healthy diet and are struggling, alcohol can be part of the problem – and not enough people know this.

Many of us already know the dangers alcohol entails and its negative effects on health, as a result of advertisements and alcohol awareness campaigns. Despite this some people still consume alcohol daily and 'moderate' drinking is common. The difficulties lie when this 'moderate' drinking develops into frequent everyday behaviour.

So this short summary offers a different way of helping you think about your drinking behaviour and a technique to monitor your alcohol intake – by looking at when and why people drink and in particular why they often perceive drinking as relaxing.

When do we drink the most?

We tend to have a drink in a range of different situations. These are some of the most common:

1. With Friends (Socialising)
2. After Work (Colleagues)
3. Tension-reduction hypothesis - drinking to reduce tension and anxiety (Cappell and Greeley, 1987)
4. Drinking during or after a meal

These are just some of the occasions when we may drink. So an important question which arises from this is WHY do we decide to drink in the first place?

Social Drinking?

Many people would argue that the odd drink is harmless and it tastes nice. And moderate drinking may even have some health benefits. Yes, all these reasons are acceptable. However, could it be that we drink mainly to be social? Numerous researchers have focused on drinking and socialisation, in particular peer group alcohol use (Orford and Velleman, 1991). Like many other addictions such as smoking, do we do these to fit in with our surrounding and then when it becomes a habit, is it just too hard to stop?

Cause or Effect?

Others suggest that drinking reduces our anxiety levels and calms us. But is this true? Does alcohol really reduce our stress and tension levels? George and Marlatt, (1983) found that it's not the alcohol itself which makes us feel stress free it is what we **think** alcohol will achieve. We believe that alcohol will reduce our tension and stress levels and pair this belief with a drink; then continue to drink because we believe that this works. In actual fact, perhaps we're just training ourselves to manage our stress with a drink. If so, why not find another way to manage our stress?

How to monitor your drinking?

There are many different ways to monitor how much you may be drinking. One favourite is a diary. A drinking diary is a good tool which can be used on a daily or weekly basis. This method of monitoring allows you to:

- Track the amount of alcohol you are drinking and the calories you are consuming.
- See when and where you may be drinking and why you decided to reach for the bottle.

Diaries can also be adapted to monitoring your food intake and your exercise regime, so have other potential health benefits. Below is a PDF which you can download and use at your own leisure.

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