

Brief Alcohol Screening/Intervention Technique

(Adapted from AAFP website)

Step 1: Brief Screening

Ask: "Do you drink alcohol?" (Yes/No)

If yes, "When was the last time you had 4 (Women) or 5 (men) drinks in one day?"

NEGATIVE SCREEN = Never, More than 12 months, or 3-12 months ago

POSITIVE SCREEN = Within the last 3 months

IF NEGATIVE SCREEN: Advise staying within maximum drinking limits:

Healthy Men up to age 65 – no more than 4 drinks/day; 14 drinks/week

Healthy Women (+ healthy men over 65) – no more than 3 drinks/day; 7 drinks/wk

Recommend **lower limits** or **abstinence** as indicated clinically

(medications, disease states, pregnancy)

Rescreen annually

IF POSITIVE SCREEN: Assess further.

How many times a week are they "binge" drinking 4/5 drinks in a day?

What is their average alcohol consumption in a week?

Have they had any consequences related to their drinking (e.g. not meeting responsibilities, late for work, worried friend or family)?

Step 2 Advise/assist

"What you have told me about your drinking concerns me"

"On a scale of 1 to 10, how ready are you to change any aspect of your drinking?"

Give advice as listed for negative screen below

"What do you think? Are you ready to try to cut down/abstain?" Negotiate an action plan

"What do you think you can do to stay within the safe drinking guidelines?"

Step 3 IF PATIENT READY TO NEGOTIATE ACTION PLAN

CUTDOWN PLAN:

1. Recommend lower limits
2. Help set goal ("Some patients choose to abstain for a while or for good, while others decide to limit their drinking" Ask: "What do you think would work best for you?")
3. Encourage reflection (Ask patients to examine what they like about drinking vs. reasons for cutting down. Ask them to examine situations that trigger unhealthy drinking)
4. Provide patient educational materials (e.g www.familydoctor.org)

Ask: "**How do you feel about this plan?**"

Then arrange f/u appt

Step 4 ARRANGE FOLLOW-UP

Arrange f/u in similar fashion to other chronic illnesses (i.e. htn). Ensure patient knows your office is always available for ongoing assistance.

- **At each visit** – support your patient's effort to cut down; review goals, progress and lab results (if appropriate); **Congratulate**, reinforce positive change; **Express concern** over lack of progress, **acknowledge** that change is difficult, offer encouragement, **assess continued motivation for change**; re-advise about sensible drinking levels...identify next goals, eval barriers, **schedule next visit**
- **For patients who need additional support** – Schedule separate, focused f/u visit; consider referral for counseling; suggest patient bring supportive friend/family member
- **For patients you advised to abstain or referred for ETOH treatment:**
Monitor for symptoms of depression and anxiety; usually will disappear after 2-4 weeks
Monitor GGT levels when appropriate
Ask treatment center for periodic updates on your patient's treatment plans and prognosis