



Brief alcohol interventions (BAIs) in primary care populations are effective in reducing alcohol consumption in men

Clinical Question	Are brief alcohol interventions (BAIs) in primary care populations effective in reducing alcohol consumption?
Bottom Line	BAI's consistently produced reductions in alcohol consumption with an average drop of four standard drinks per week. At one year's follow-up, people who had received BAIs drank less alcohol (a difference of 6 to 25 grams per week, mean 41 grams). For men (some 70% of participants) the benefit of BAIs was a reduction of 57 grams per week (range 25-89 grams). The benefit was not clear for women. The reduction in drinking was similar in the normal clinical setting as in a research setting with greater resources. Longer counselling had little additional benefit.
Context	Excessive drinking contributes significantly to social problems, physical and psychological illness, injury and death. BAIs include feedback on alcohol use and harms, identification of high-risk situations for drinking and coping strategies, increased motivation and the development of a personal plan to reduce drinking. They involve one to four sessions, and take place within the time-frame of a standard consultation, 5 to 10 minutes for a general practitioner, longer for a nurse.
Caveat	BAIs are aimed at individuals drinking at hazardous or harmful levels, i.e. whose consumption exceeds recommended drinking levels (SHOULD WE STATE THESE HERE? – THEY DO VARY FROM COUNTRY TO COUNTRY), but not at those who are dependent on alcohol.

Reference	Kaner EFS, Beyer F, Dickinson HO, Pienaar E, Campbell F, Schlesinger C, Heather N, Saunders J, Burnand B. Effectiveness of brief alcohol interventions in primary care populations. <i>Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews</i> 2007, Issue 2. Art. No.: CD004148. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD004148.pub3. This review contains 28 studies with over 7,000 participants.
Date (Author) Pearl #24	April 2007 (Brian R McAvoy)

NNT = numbers needed to treat to benefit one person

NNH = numbers needed to harm one person

Both NNT and NNH are only reported if the studies or pooling of studies is statistically significant

Disclaimer : The P.E.A.R.L.S. are for educational use only and are not meant to guide clinical activity nor are they a clinical guideline.