

Tips for...

# A Safe Night Out



Every time you head out to a bar or club for an evening, you put yourself at risk of alcohol-related harm as a result of your drinking, or the drinking of others. While your safest option is to abstain from drinking and avoid places where people are being served liquor, there are ways to have a safe night out where alcohol is involved. By making informed decisions about where you're going to go, and by paying attention to your surroundings after you get there, you can minimize the risk of alcohol-related harms to yourself and your friends.

## Deciding where to go

When you're deciding which bars or clubs to hit, opt for the places that offer the least risks. If you're not sure what to watch out for, keep in mind that incidents of aggression, assault and drunk driving are most often associated with places that put little effort into ambience and ignore standard serving and safety practices.

## It's best to avoid bars and clubs that:

- are located near clusters of other alcohol-serving establishments and liquor outlets
- stay open for extended hours and allow over-crowding
- have happy hours and two-for-one drink specials
- serve customers who are clearly intoxicated
- provide low-quality entertainment
- have aggressive, poorly-trained security and service staff
- lack telephones and safe-ride transportation options
- have blocked exits and pathways, as well as poor interior and exterior lighting
- feature uncomfortable furniture and noise levels
- have dark, dirty washroom areas



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## What to look for in a bar or club

### Servers and staff

- Servers that cut people off when they've had too much to drink reduce the chances of drunk individuals starting fights or driving home intoxicated.
- Staff trained to diffuse conflict and manage aggressive behaviour can stop a frustrating situation from becoming a full-on fist fight.

### Environment

- Bars and clubs with multiple floors (as opposed to a single floor) make it easier for customers to see and be seen by staff in the event a conflict erupts in a crowd.
- Clear pathways and exits make it easier for people to move through an

establishment without bumping into others and potentially triggering a disruption.

- Comfortable lighting, seating, sound and ventilation keep patrons calmer and less likely to become frustrated.
- Sufficient, well-lit washrooms reduce patrons' risk of becoming victims of assault and other crimes.
- Tempered glassware is safer and less likely to be broken and used as weapons in a bar fight.
- Places that offer free soft drinks or water are linked to fewer drunk driving charges and fewer cases of public intoxication.
- Where food is available, there tends to be less aggressive patronage and fewer incidents of violent behavior.

### Entertainment

- In places featuring varied, high-quality entertainment, there are fewer incidents of boredom, frustration and intoxication.

### Door security

- Trained door staff know how to diffuse conflict before it erupts, and are skilled at behaviour management.
- Door staff who regularly check identification are more likely to work for bars or clubs that value both the law and customers.
- Where security cameras are present, there tends to be less misconduct and violence outside the establishment.

## Low-risk drinking guidelines

- Avoid intoxication (no more than four drinks a day for men, and three for women).
- Limit your weekly intake (no more than 20 drinks for men, and no more than 10 for women).
- Take breaks during the week (at least two days should be deemed "alcohol-free days").
- Avoid alcohol in situations where "no drinking" is the safest option, such as when operating a vehicle, when pregnant, and when using medications.

## Outdoor environment

- Fully-lit outdoor areas deter people from committing crimes, loitering or engaging in disorderly behaviour, while allowing patrons to see more of their surroundings and feel safer when they're heading home.
- When a bar or club has clean, clear sidewalk space and queuing areas, patrons are less likely to suffer falls and injuries related to line-ups and mobility problems.

## Transportation options

- Safe-ride services offered in bars and clubs have proven successful in decreasing alcohol-related vehicle accidents.
- Establishments that have accessible telephones and taxi services, or are close to major bus routes, encourage crowds to disperse quicker.

Nearly one in 10 British Columbians claims they've done themselves damage—physically, socially, financially or legally—while drinking. And 35% of people in the province say they've suffered physically or emotionally from someone else's alcohol use.

## Types of alcohol-related harms:

- verbal abuse, aggression and violence
- physical or sexual assault
- accidental fall causing injury or death
- drunk driving accident or death
- depression or other mental illness
- homicide or suicide
- relationship problems with family and co-workers
- financial and legal problems

## Did you know...

- In 2004, 16 bars in Vancouver were fined a total of \$68,000 and were closed for 81 days combined for overcrowding, serving intoxicated customers, failing to check ID and staff drinking on the job.
- In 2004, 2,175 people in BC were injured or killed in alcohol-related vehicle accidents.

## What to do if you or someone you know is experiencing a problem with alcohol

For information on treatment options and resources throughout BC, call the **Alcohol and Drug Information Referral Service** at 1-800-663-1441. In Greater Vancouver, call 604-660-9382.

For information on ways to help yourself with a substance use problem, see the “Tips” section of the Here to Help website: [www.heretohelp.bc.ca](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca). The website also features detailed information on substances and mental health disorders.

You can also find information on a wide variety of substance use issues on the Centre for Addictions Research of BC website: [www.carbc.ca](http://www.carbc.ca).

