

Can Alcohol Consumption Increase Dementia Risk?



We all know that drinking too much alcohol has a detrimental effect on our health, causing issues ranging from liver disease to depression. So, whilst cutting alcohol out of your life is not necessary, keeping consumption to a minimum is recommended. The current NHS guidelines state that you should not drink more than 14 units of alcohol a week. For reference, a 125ml glass of wine is about 1.5 units, whilst a pint of beer is about 2.5 units.

Guidelines also suggest that your recommended weekly amount of alcohol should be spread over 3 or more days, this is due to the negative effect binge drinking can have on your system. Binge drinking is particularly harmful as it increases alcohol levels in the blood dangerously quickly.

But, whilst we understand the general health issues of excessive alcohol consumption, does too much drinking also increase your chances of dementia? Well, in short, the answer is yes. Drinking more than the recommended weekly allowance can increase your chance of developing certain types of dementia such as vascular disease and Alzheimer's.

People who are alcohol dependent, (generally viewed as more than 50 units for men per week, and more than 35 units per week for women), have an increased chance of developing alcohol-related brain damage. This occurs when drinking high levels of alcohol over the years starts to cause damage directly to the brain, causing the brain to work differently, and its shape and structure to change.

And, whilst binge drinking or excessive drinking can increase your chances of developing the disease, even drinking slightly above the recommended levels can increase your risk. So, ensuring you stay within the recommended guidelines is ideal to help keep your chances of developing dementia low, as well as ensuring your own health and well-being.

However, whilst excessive drinking can contribute to a dementia diagnosis, it is not a direct cause, and there are other lifestyle choices you can make to help decrease your chances of developing the disease. For example, smoking, lack of exercise and poor diet can also contribute towards a dementia diagnosis in later life.