



UNDERWRITING 201: ALCOHOL ABUSE

Alcohol Usage: Consumption of alcohol is common in American society. For the majority of drinkers of alcoholic beverages, there is little risk to health and longevity. In fact, some studies indicate that an occasional glass of wine or bourbon may improve your health. However, excessive alcohol intake has a substantial impact on population mortality. In applicants with a history of risky alcohol habits, an increased premium (*or possibly rejection*) is necessary on their life insurance coverage.

Complications of alcohol excess significant to life insurance underwriting:

Cardiac risks (*atrial fibrillation, cardiomyopathy*).

Nervous system risks (*Blackouts, seizures, delirium tremens, brain damage, psychosis and more*).

Psychiatric and social issues (*Depression, anxiety, suicide, abuse of drugs*). Other issues include Kidney Failure and Cirrhosis and Pneumonia, Accidents and Trauma.

Binge Drinking is another risk and is defined as, 'heavy drinking to the point of intoxication on a periodic basis.'

Risky Drinking (per the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism) is defined as:

- For Men: More than 14 drinks per week or more than 4 per occasion.
- For Women: More than 7 drinks per week or more than 3 per occasion.

One drink is equal to 12 g of pure alcohol, a 12 ounce beer, a 5 ounce wine or a jigger of hard liquor.

MITIGATING FACTORS:

Besides the risks associated with excessive alcohol intake, the underwriter also considers favorable historical items such as: active participation in Alcoholics Anonymous, voluntary initiation of treatment, single period of treatment or hospitalization, maintenance of stable family life, sustained employment financial solvency and good health without reports of violence or arrests. If the individual is able to successfully stop drinking alcohol without relapse, after seven to ten years, the mortality rate approaches that of the general population.

A blood test, carbohydrate deficient transferrin (CDT), can sometimes be used in underwriting to identify those consuming excess alcohol.

UNDERWRITING GUIDELINES FOR ALCOHOL EXCESS

RISKY EXCESS WITHOUT EVIDENCE OF OTHER SOCIAL, LEGAL, HEALTH PROBLEMS AND NO HISTORY OF ALCOHOL TREATMENT	TABLE C
Evidence of financial, social, or health (physical or psychiatric) problems.	Minimum postponement of 2 years. Ratings then will range from standard to Table F, depending on time since abstinence/sobriety began.
Multiple DUIs	
Overt Alcoholism	
Has Undergone Treatment	
Abuse of other drugs	

Adjustments (*up or down*) may be made to the above ratings depending on severity of the excess, severity of associated complications, evidence of alcohol dependence and/or withdrawal, legal problem related to alcohol such as Driving Under the Influence (**DUI**), abuse of other drugs, number of relapses and current participation in a group such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

If an individual has had a DUI, most companies will NOT issue a standard rating for a person who had the DUI within 2 to 5 years.

When you have a client who has now or has in the past had a problem with alcohol – don't walk away from them. [CLICK HERE](#) and download our Alcohol form and submit it to our office. We can tell you fairly quickly how we can handle their situation.

Thank you for your business!



Don Boozer
1-800-543-0886