



## Women and Alcohol - Walk & Talk

The walk from the waiting room to the exam room is an opportunity for medical assistants to "walk and talk" with patients. Here is a script that shows how a medical assistant can educate patients about the unique ways that alcohol can impact the health and wellbeing of women.

**Background:** In 2022, 66.4 million women ages 12 and older (over 46% of the US female population) reported drinking in the last month, while 27.5 million women 12 and older reported binge drinking (consuming 4 or more drinks on a single occasion). Alcohol affects women differently than men primarily due to physiological factors, including body composition, hormonal differences, and lower levels of the enzyme responsible for breaking down alcohol before it enters the bloodstream. Women are also at greater risk for developing alcohol-related problems than men. Women who drink are at a higher risk of developing cancers of the breast, liver, mouth, throat, esophagus, and colon. Although women are less likely to drink than men, the gender gap is narrowing. In 2022, the percentage of men who reported drinking in the past month was 56.2% and, for women, 49.2%. Women are also more likely to drink to cope than men and research suggests that people who drink to cope have a higher risk of developing alcohol use disorder.

**Medical Assistant:** \*calls patient from the waiting room\*

**Patient:** \*walks back to hallway\*

**Medical Assistant:** Hi, how have you been?

**Patient:** Not too bad.

**Medical Assistant:** Glad to hear. I wanted to give you this card about women and alcohol. You may have heard that rates of alcohol consumption, alcohol use disorder, and excessive drinking among women have significantly increased over the past two decades. Research suggests that part of the reason that women are drinking more is to cope with increases in stress and managing overwhelming demands. In popular media, you may have seen memes or other content about 'Mommy wine culture,' which is a term that was popularized on the internet and refers to the need have a regular drink to cope with the stresses of motherhood and childcare. Most recently, we saw the COVID-19 pandemic affect women's health and wellbeing in disproportionate ways. Women were more likely than men to experience layoffs or leave their jobs to care for children when schools and childcare centers closed. Fortunately, there are several effective ways to reduce and manage stress without drinking, and several resources to help people cut down or stop drinking if they choose. If you have questions or are concerned about how alcohol is affecting your health, please talk with your doctor. There are also tips and resources on the back of the card. \*hands postcard with graphic to patient\*

**Patient:** Okay, thanks. Good to know.

**Medical Assistant:** No problem.



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