

Sample Brief Intervention (from Alcohol and Brief Intervention for Trauma Patients)

The patient has positive screening results. However, because the AUDIT indicates that the patient has an early, and relatively mild, drinking problem, only simple advice is needed. This intervention takes about 3 minutes.

Transition statement to move from screening to brief intervention

CLINICIAN: Thank you for answering those questions. Would you be interested to find out how your score on this questionnaire compares with other people?

PATIENT: Sure, I guess.

Giving information/ feedback

CLINICIAN: Okay. Well those 10 questions have been given to thousands of people around the world so that people can find out whether it would be good for them to change their drinking. Scores can range from 0–40. Scores between 0–6 (women)/0–7(men) are considered low-risk drinking; scores between 8–15 are considered hazardous drinking, and scores above 15 likely indicate more serious alcohol problems. Your score was 9, which puts your drinking in the hazardous

range.

PATIENT: Oh wow.

Understanding patients' views of drinking and enhancing motivation

CLINICIAN: Surprised?

PATIENT: Yeah. I figured I'd be, you know, in the lowest range. CLINICIAN: So you thought your drinking was less than average...

PATIENT: Yeah, I mean my friends drink more than me. I'm not an alcoholic or anything like that.

CLINICIAN: Well, let's not worry so much about labels here. I'm more concerned about whether your drinking is going to hurt you in the future or not.

PATIENT: Yeah.

CLINICIAN: Many of our patients are surprised to learn what their scores are, and it's just an opportunity to think about making a change. If you were to do that, your chances of avoiding another injury in the future would be much better.

PATIENT: I don't know about quitting, that seems like way overkill for me. But maybe I could cut down.

Giving advice and negotiating

CLINICIAN: Many patients can successfully cut down so they reduce their risk of injury and other problems. Men who are successful in cutting down are able to drink no more than 4 standard drinks per occasion and no more than 14 drinks per week. What do you think you'll do?

PATIENT: Well, I guess I could give it a try. It's not like it's a big deal to me or anything...

CLINICIAN: That's really great. You sound determined. So your limit would be no more than 4 drinks per occasion (beers, 5 oz. of wine or a mixed drink with 1.5 oz of spirits), and no more than 14 drinks per week. It's a good opportunity for you to test your control over alcohol. Just remember that this guideline means you can't have all of your weekly drinks in one day! (both laugh) And most important of all, no drinks at all if you're driving.

PATIENT: Yeah, well I think I can stay under those limits pretty easily. And also, I never drink and drive anyway.

CLINICIAN: Really? That's great to hear. How do you avoid that?

PATIENT: If I take my car out, I just don't drink anything, period, end of story. And if I know I'm going to drink, I use a designated driver.

Closing on good
terms

CLINICIAN: Good for you, and thanks for talking with me.