The style of the physician’s intervention is a major determinant of success.

Patients may engage in risky drinking (levels associated with risk for social, legal, economic, and health problems) or harmful drinking (having already experienced adverse consequences due to drinking). The entire spectrum, from risky drinking to alcohol use disorders, is referred to as alcohol misuse (U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, 2004). Patients with the most harmful drinking habits meet diagnostic criteria for alcohol dependence (American Psychiatric Association 1994). This Courage to Care fact sheet addresses the need for brief alcohol screening and alcohol counseling in primary care settings as a preventive approach to foster the health of our military community. The companion fact sheet, Alcohol and Your Health, can be downloaded and distributed to your patients. It lists DoD approved resources for additional information and help with alcohol problems.
• Men younger than 65—2 drinks/day or 14 drinks/week
• Women and men age 65 or older—1 drink/day or 7 drinks/week

At risk drinking
• Men younger than 65: > 14/week or > 4/occasion
• Women > 7-11/week or >3/occasion
• Men or women age 65 or older: >7/week or >1/occasion

If you have concerns about your health and associated alcohol risk level please talk with your healthcare provider.

Simple advice on alcohol health risks and when not to drink
- Pregnant or trying to become pregnant
- Taking prescription or over-the-counter medications that may cause harmful reactions when mixed with alcohol
- Under the age of 21
- Recovering from alcoholism or are unable to control the amount you drink
- Affected by a medical condition that may be worsened by alcohol

You Can Make A Difference
Studies have found that most patients with alcohol misuse were not counseled about their drinking. Embracing a broader, preventive focus that includes brief screening and counseling of every patient can help identify those who need help. This small and timely intervention can guide toward change and reduce the impact of problem drinking on individuals and families.

Alcohol Counseling
Alcohol counseling involves 1) educating patients about safe and at risk drinking levels, and 2) providing ‘simple advice’ about the risks on drinking for their health history or medical condition.

Definitions of moderate and binge drinking (NIAAA)
- Moderate drinking is up to 1 drink per day for women and up to 2 drinks per day for men
- Binge drinking is 4 drinks for women in two hours and 5 drinks for men in two hours