

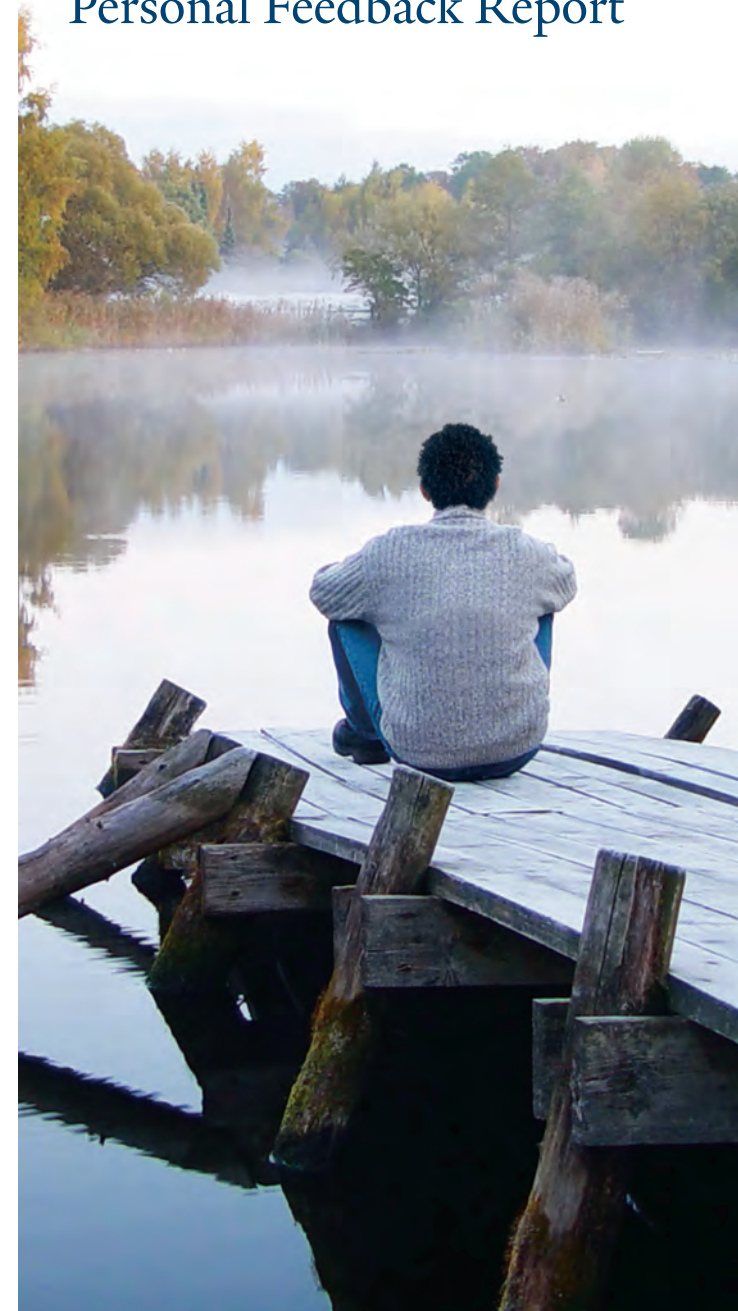
# STEP Trial

## Personal Feedback Report

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This **Personal Feedback Report** summarizes results from your pretreatment evaluation. Your clinician has explained these results to you. This information is to help you understand the written report you have received and to remember what your clinician told you.

For more information, please contact:  
(203) 737-3347



## 1. YOUR DRINKING

The first line in this section shows you the number of drinks that you reported having on an average week in the past 30 days. Because different alcohol beverages vary in their strength, we have converted your regular drinking pattern into standard “one drink” units. In this system, one drink is equal to the following:

**A standard serving of beer, distilled spirits and wine each contain the same amount of alcohol.**



All of these drinks contain the same amount of the same kind of alcohol: one-half ounce of pure ethyl alcohol.

How much is too much? It depends on many factors. Current research indicates that people who average three or more standard drinks per day have much higher risk of health and social problems. For some people, however, even 1-2 drinks per day would be too many. Pregnant women, for example, are best advised to abstain from alcohol all together, because even small amounts of regular drinking have been found to increase risk for the unborn child. Certain health problems (such as HIV infection or liver disease) can make even moderate drinking unsafe. Some people find that they are unable to drink moderately, and having even one or two drinks leads to intoxication.

Your total number of drinks per week on an average week tells only part of the story. It is not healthy, for example, to have 12 drinks per week by saving them all up for Saturdays. Neither is it safe to have even a few drinks and then drive.

## 2. RISK FACTORS: OTHER DRUG USE

It is clear that some people have a much higher risk of alcohol and other drug problems. “High risk” does not mean that one will definitely have serious problems with alcohol or other drugs. Neither does “low risk” mean that one will be free of such problems. High-risk people, however, have greater chances of developing serious problems.

A person who uses other drugs besides alcohol runs several additional risks. Decreased use of one drug may simply result in the increased use of another. The effects of different drugs can multiply when they are taken together, with dangerous results. A tolerance to one drug can increase tolerance to another, and it is common for multiple drug users to become addicted to several drugs. The use of

other drugs, then, increases your risk for serious problems. Based on the lifetime drug use that you reported during your interview, your risk in this regard was judged to be low, medium, or high.

## 3. NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES

From your pretreatment evaluation, we calculated your AUDIT-C score, which reflects your recent alcohol consumption.

The AUDIT-C is a scale devised by the World Health Organization to evaluate a person’s problematic use of alcohol. Higher scores reflect recent problems related to drinking.

Also, on two questions from the Addiction Severity Index, a different assessment, you indicated your degree of bother by alcohol problems and interest in treatment. These results may reflect the impact of alcohol use on your life.

## 4. BLOOD TESTS

Your pretreatment evaluation also included recent blood tests. These particular blood tests were chosen because they have been shown in previous research to be negatively affected by heavy drinking or to be important in HIV-infected patients. You should realize that normal results on these tests do not guarantee that you are in good health (for example, that your liver is functioning normally). An abnormal score on one or more of these tests, however, probably reflects unhealthy changes in your body resulting from excessive use of alcohol and/or other drugs.

Research indicates that modestly abnormal scores on the blood tests reported here will often show improvement and a return to normal range when harmful drinking and other drug use patterns are changed. The longer one continues drinking, however, the more difficult it is to reverse the physical damage.

Some of these tests are directly related to how the liver is working. Your liver is extremely important to your health. It is involved in producing energy, and it filters and neutralizes impurities and poisons in your bloodstream. Alcohol damages the liver, and after a long period of heavy drinking, parts of the liver begin to die. This is the process of cirrhosis, but physical changes in the liver can be caused by drinking long before cirrhosis appears. As the liver becomes damaged, it begins to leak enzymes into the blood and is less efficient in doing its work. This can be reflected in abnormally elevated values on the tests reported in this section.

Elevated values on any of these tests should be taken seriously. They do not happen by chance and are very likely related to physical changes in the body caused by excessive drinking. Consult a physician who is knowledgeable about the effects of alcohol on the body.

Hepatitis C infection makes individuals particularly sensitive to the effects of alcohol.

CD4 cells are attacked by the HIV virus and impact your ability to fight infection. If CD4 cells are less than 200, that is considered to be AIDS.

HIV-1 viral load reflects how much virus is circulating in your blood. The goal of HIV treatment is for this to be undetectable.

The VACS Index is a score based on several different blood tests to reflect your overall health. With every 5 point increase in this number, your risk of death over 5 years increases by 1%. This number can get better or worse depending on your medication adherence and other health habits, including alcohol consumption.

## 5. USE OF WEB-BASED SELF-HELP MATERIALS

Some patients find the internet as a useful source to help them learn about the impact of alcohol and ways that they can decrease their drinking. Your feedback form indicates the number of hours you reported doing this in the past 30 days. We encourage you to visit a number of the websites listed on your feedback form and use them to help decrease the adverse impact of alcohol on your health. If you do not have access to the internet at home, you may access internet services within the VA or consider using your local public library.

Some of these websites are specific to Veterans and provide screening and information:

<http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/substanceabuse.asp>

[https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/anonymous.portal?\\_nfpb=true&\\_pageLabel=mentalHealth&contentPage=mh\\_screening\\_tools/ALCOHOL\\_SCREENING.HTML](https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/anonymous.portal?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=mentalHealth&contentPage=mh_screening_tools/ALCOHOL_SCREENING.HTML)

Some have been produced for Veterans and others designed to help you decrease your drinking:

<http://www.veterandrinkingcheckup.org/>

<http://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/>

<http://www.alcoholfree.info/>

Please investigate these sites and find one that you feel comfortable using regularly.