

Cutting Down on Your Drinking

If you are drinking too much, you can improve your life and health by cutting down. There are steps you can take and tips you can follow to stop alcohol from becoming an adverse or destructive force in your life.

Are you drinking too much?

How do you know if you drink too much? Answer "yes" or "no" to these questions:

- Do you tend to drink alone when you feel angry or sad?
- Does your drinking ever make you late for work?
- Does your family worry about your drinking?
- Do you ever drink after telling yourself you will not?
- Do you ever forget what you did while you were drinking?
- Do you get headaches or experience a hangover after you have been drinking?
- Does your drinking affect your decision-making abilities and judgement?

If you answered "yes" to one or more of these questions, you may have a drinking problem. Consult a medical professional to find out for certain. A doctor will be able to tell you whether you should cut down or abstain. If you are an alcoholic or have other medical problems, you should not just cut down on your drinking, you should stop drinking completely. Your doctor will advise you about what is best for you.

Set and Work Towards a Goal

The following steps can help you cut down on your drinking:

Write Down Your Reasons for Cutting Down or Stopping Your Drinking

Why do you want to drink less? There are many reasons why you might want to cut down or stop drinking. Perhaps you want to improve your health, sleep better, or get on better with your family or friends. Make a list of the reasons why you want to drink less.

Set a Drinking Goal

Choose a limit for how much you drink. You may choose to cut down or not drink at all. Women who are cutting down should have no more than one drink a day, while men who are limiting their alcohol intake should not consume more than two drinks a day.

One drink equals:

- 355 ml of beer
- 148 ml of wine

- 44 ml of liquor

These limits may be too high for some people with certain medical problems or who are older. Consult your doctor about a limit that is appropriate for you. Then write your drinking goal on a piece of paper. Put it where you can see it, such as on your fridge or bathroom mirror. Your paper might look like this:

- I will start on this day: _____.
- I will not drink more than ____ drinks in one day.
- I will not drink more than ____ drinks in one week.
- I will stop drinking alcohol.

Keep a 'Diary' of Your Drinking Habits

To help you reach your goal, keep a "diary" of your drinking habits. For example, write down every time you have a drink for one week. Try to keep the diary for three or four weeks. This will give you an idea of how much you drink and at what times. You might be surprised. How different is your goal from the amount you drink now?

Tips for Cutting Down

Now that you know why you want to drink less and have a goal in mind, consider the following tips to help you achieve it:

- **Keep a close eye on things at home:** Keep a very small amount or no alcohol at home. Do not keep temptations around.
- **Drink slowly:** When you drink, sip your drink slowly. Have a one-hour break in between drinks. Drink soda, water or juice after consuming an alcoholic beverage. Do not drink on an empty stomach. Eat food before or while you drink.
- **Take a break from alcohol:** Pick one or two days each week when you will not drink at all. Then try to stop drinking for one week. Think about how you feel physically and emotionally on these days. When you succeed and feel better, you may find it easier to cut down for good.
- **Learn how to say no:** You do not have to drink when other people drink. You do not have to accept a drink that is given to you. Practise ways to say no politely. For example, you can tell people you feel better when you drink less. Stay away from people who hassle you about not drinking.
- **Stay active:** What would you like to do instead of drinking? Use the time and money spent on drinking to do something fun with your family or friends. Go out for a meal, see a film, play a sport or start a hobby.
- **Get support:** Cutting down on your drinking may be difficult at times. Ask your family and friends for support to help you reach your goal. Talk to your doctor if you are having trouble cutting down. Get the help you need to reach your goal.

- Watch out for temptations: Beware of people, places or times that make you drink, even if you do not want to. Stay away from people who drink a lot or bars where you used to go. Plan ahead what you will do to avoid drinking when you are tempted.
- Do not drink when you are angry or upset, or when you've had a bad day: These are habits you need to break if you want to drink less.
- Do not give up: Most people do not cut down or give up drinking all at once. Just like a diet, it is not easy to change. That is okay. If you do not manage to reach your goal the first time, try again. Remember: Get support from people who care about you and want to help.

Here when you need us.

Call: 844-207-5465

Online: guidanceresources.com

App: GuidanceNowSM

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