

PHC

Dry January - Alcohol Awareness

What is alcohol and how does it affect you? Here you'll get the facts:



Regularly drinking more than 14 units a week risks damaging your health.

- Fourteen units is equivalent to six pints of average-strength beer or 10 small glasses of low-strength wine.
- New evidence around the health harms from regular drinking have emerged in recent years.
There is now a better understanding of the link between drinking and some illnesses, including a range of cancers.
- The previously held position that some level of alcohol was good for the heart has been revised.
It is now thought that the evidence on a protective effect from moderate drinking is less strong than previously thought.

Low-risk drinking advice

- To keep health risks from alcohol to a low level if you drink most weeks: men and women are advised not to drink more than 14 units a week on a regular basis spread your drinking over three or more days if you regularly drink as much as 14 units a week.
if you want to cut down, try to have several drink-free days each week
- If you're pregnant or think you could become pregnant, the safest approach is not to drink alcohol at all to keep risks to your baby to a minimum.

No 'safe' drinking level



- If you drink less than 14 units a week, this is considered low-risk drinking. It's called "low risk" rather than "safe" because there is no safe drinking level.
- The type of illnesses you can develop after 10 to 20 years of regularly drinking more than 14 units a week include:
 - cancers of the mouth, throat and breast
 - stroke
 - heart disease
 - liver disease
 - brain damage
 - damage to the nervous system

The effects of alcohol on your health will depend on how much you drink. The less you drink, the lower the health risks.

Use this free Self-Assessment Tool to see if you are drinking too much:

www.drinkaware.co.uk/advice/are-you-drinking-too-much/

Tips on cutting down

If you regularly drink more than 14 units a week, try these simple tips to help you cut down. Fourteen units is equivalent to six pints of average-strength beer or 10 small glasses of low-strength wine.



- Make a plan
 - Before you start drinking, set a limit on how much you're going to drink.
 - Set a budget
 - Only take a fixed amount of money to spend on alcohol.
- Let them know
 - If you let your friends and family know you're cutting down and it's important to you, you could get support from them.
 - Take it a day at a time
 - Cut back a little each day. That way, every day you do is a success.
 - Make it a smaller one
 - You can still enjoy a drink, but go for smaller sizes. Try bottled beer instead of pints, or a small glass of wine instead of a large one.
 - Have a lower-strength drink
 - Cut down the alcohol by swapping strong beers or wines for ones with a lower strength (ABV in %). You'll find this information on the bottle.
 - Stay hydrated
 - Have a glass of water before you have alcohol and alternate alcoholic drinks with water or a soft drink.
 - Take a break
 - Have several drink-free days each week.

Benefits of cutting down

The immediate effects of cutting down include:



- feeling better in the mornings
- being less tired during the day
- your skin may start to look better
- you'll start to feel fitter
- you may stop gaining weight

Long-term benefits include:

- Mood
 - There's a strong link between heavy drinking and depression, and hangovers often make you feel anxious and low. If you already feel anxious or sad, drinking can make this worse, so cutting down may put you in a better mood generally.
- Sleep
 - Drinking can affect your sleep. Although it can help some people fall asleep quickly, it can disrupt your sleep patterns and stop you sleeping deeply. So cutting down on alcohol should help you feel more rested when you wake up.
- Behavior
 - Drinking can affect your judgment and behavior. You may behave irrationally or aggressively when you're drunk. Memory loss can be a problem during drinking and in the long term for regular heavy drinkers.

- Heart
Long-term heavy drinking can lead to your heart becoming enlarged. This is a serious condition that can't be completely reversed, but stopping drinking can stop it getting worse.
- Immune system
Regular drinking can affect your immune system. Heavy drinkers tend to catch more infectious diseases.

If you're worried about your own or someone else's drinking, contact Drinkline for a free, confidential conversation on 0300 123 1110 (weekdays 9am – 8pm, weekends 11am – 4pm).

Further information can be found here:

www.drinkaware.co.uk

<http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/alcohol/Pages/Alcoholhome.aspx>

<http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk/Pages/Category/alcohol-concern-cymru>

<http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk/>

<http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/support-us/find-an-event/charity-challenges/dryathlon>