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# ALCOHOL MISUSE

Practical Guidance  
First Published: January 2020



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# ISN'T DRINKING JUST A PART OF NORMAL LIFE?

## WE CAN ALL BENEFIT FROM DRINKING LESS...

...weight loss, more energy and less chance of doing things we might regret. Cutting down can sometimes seem tricky but there are lots of things you can do.

## SO WHAT IS ALCOHOL MISUSE?

Alcohol abuse, or misuse, means drinking excessively, which would be drinking more than the lower risk limits of alcohol consumption on a regular basis. Alcohol consumption is measured in units. A unit of alcohol is 10ml of pure alcohol, which is about: half a pint of normal strength lager, a single measure (25ml) of spirits or a small glass (125ml) of wine contains about 1.5 units of alcohol.

## SO ASK YOURSELF...

Am I drinking too much alcohol? You could be misusing alcohol if...

YOU FEEL YOU  
SHOULD CUT DOWN  
ON YOUR DRINKING

OTHER PEOPLE  
HAVE BEEN  
CRITICISING YOUR  
DRINKING

YOU FEEL GUILTY  
OR BAD ABOUT  
YOUR DRINKING

YOU NEED A DRINK FIRST THING IN THE  
MORNING TO STEADY YOUR NERVES OR GET  
RID OF A HANGOVER

YOU'RE SOMETIMES UNABLE TO  
REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED  
THE NIGHT BEFORE BECAUSE OF  
DRINKING

YOU DON'T DO WHAT'S EXPECTED  
OF YOU AS A RESULT OF DRINKING  
EG: MISSING AN APPOINTMENT OR  
WORK BECAUSE OF BEING DRUNK  
OR HANGOVER

YOU REGULARLY EXCEED THE LOWER-RISK  
DAILY LIMIT FOR ALCOHOL

## LOWER RISK LIMITS

TO KEEP YOUR RISK OF ALCOHOL-RELATED HARM LOW,  
THE NHS RECOMMENDS:

NOT REGULARLY DRINKING MORE THAN 14 UNITS OF  
ALCOHOL A WEEK

IF YOU DRINK AS MUCH AS 14 UNITS A WEEK, SPREAD  
THESE EVENLY OVER THREE OR MORE DAYS

IF YOU'RE TRYING TO REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF  
ALCOHOL YOU DRINK, IT'S A GOOD IDEA TO HAVE  
SEVERAL ALCOHOL-FREE DAYS EACH WEEK

REGULAR OR FREQUENT DRINKING MEANS DRINKING  
ALCOHOL MOST WEEKS



## HOW CAN YOU HELP YOURSELF?

Practical guidance you can follow...

## DON'TS



### ALCOHOL FREE

Try to drink alcohol free beers and try and find one that you like.



### PACE & ABV

Try to add ice to white wine to help pace yourself and check alcohol content of wines - aim for 12% or 13% instead of 14% or 15% ABV.



### GIVE IT A MISS

If you are feeling pressured to drink too much then have a lower strength beer or soft drink when it is your round.



### SIT OR PLAY

You drink more slowly when sitting than standing up so sit down when drinking or get up and play pool or darts or dance to drink less.

DOS



### STOP SUDDENLY

Get medical advice before you stop drinking if you have physical withdrawal symptoms. It can be dangerous to stop drinking too quickly without proper support.



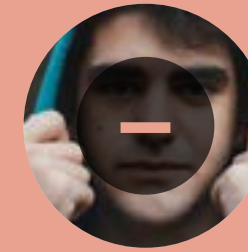
### DRINK EMPTY

Don't drink on an empty stomach - as the food competes with the alcohol and slows down how quickly it is digested.



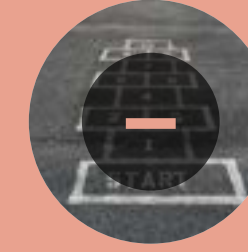
### KEEP UP

Don't feel pressured to keep up drinking speed with anyone else.



### STOP BELIEVING

Don't think you can't change. People who drink alcohol are regularly changing what they drink depending on how much money or time they have to drink. Everyone changes their behaviour all the time.



### SQUARE ONE

Don't think if you are trying to stop and have a slip up that you are back to square one. Look at what went wrong this time and learn how to change the way you manage it next time.



### GLASS AT A TIME

At home, pour a glass rather than having a bottle of wine on the table or only have a drink with a meal, you are the boss at home.



### CALORIE COUNT

Watch the calories - a standard glass of wine can contain as many calories as a piece of chocolate, and a pint of lager has about the same calorie count as a packet of crisps.



### ALTERNATE

Make every second drink a non-alcoholic one.



### WATER

Start and end your night with water - you'll thank yourself.

### DEPENDENT DRINKING

AS WELL AS CAUSING SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEMS, LONG-TERM ALCOHOL MISUSE CAN LEAD TO SOCIAL PROBLEMS, SUCH AS UNEMPLOYMENT, DIVORCE, DOMESTIC ABUSE AND HOMELESSNESS. IF SOMEONE LOSES CONTROL OVER THEIR DRINKING AND HAS AN EXCESSIVE DESIRE TO DRINK, IT'S KNOWN AS DEPENDENT DRINKING.

DEPENDENT DRINKING USUALLY AFFECTS A PERSON'S QUALITY OF LIFE AND RELATIONSHIPS, BUT THEY MAY NOT ALWAYS FIND IT EASY TO SEE OR ACCEPT THIS. SEVERELY DEPENDENT DRINKERS ARE OFTEN ABLE TO TOLERATE VERY HIGH LEVELS OF ALCOHOL IN AMOUNTS WHICH WOULD DANGEROUSLY AFFECT OR EVEN KILL SOME PEOPLE.

A DEPENDENT DRINKER USUALLY EXPERIENCES PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS IF THEY SUDDENLY CUT DOWN OR STOP DRINKING, INCLUDING: HAND TREMORS ('THE SHAKES'), SWEATING, SEEING THINGS THAT AREN'T REAL (VISUAL HALLUCINATIONS), DEPRESSION, ANXIETY AND DIFFICULTY SLEEPING - INSOMNIA. THIS OFTEN LEADS TO RELIEF DRINKING TO AVOID WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS.

# WHAT PROFESSIONAL HELP IS AVAILABLE IF I WANT IT?

### REMEMBER...

...you are never alone.

Talk to a mate. Ring a helpline. Go online. There is no need to let your drinking ruin your life - help is available.

Visit your GP who will be able to help you and refer you on to local services for support.

**Drinkline** is the national alcohol helpline. If you're worried about your own or someone else's drinking, you can call this free helpline in complete confidence. Call 0300 123 1110 (weekdays 9am to 8pm, weekends 11am to 4pm).

**Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)** is a free self-help group. Its "12-step" programme involves getting sober with the help of regular support groups. [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/)

**Al-Anon Family Groups** offers support and understanding to the families and friends of problem drinkers, whether they're still drinking or not. Alateen is part of Al-Anon and can be attended by 12- to 17-year-olds who are affected by another person's drinking, usually a parent. [www.al-anonuk.org.uk/](http://www.al-anonuk.org.uk/)

**Addaction** is a UK-wide treatment agency that helps individuals,

families and communities manage the effects of drug and alcohol misuse. [www.addaction.org.uk/](http://www.addaction.org.uk/)

**Adfam** is a national charity working with families affected by drugs and alcohol. Adfam operates an online message board and a database of local support groups. [www.adfam.org.uk/](http://www.adfam.org.uk/)

**The National Association for Children of Alcoholics (Nacoa)** provides a free, confidential telephone and email helpline for children of alcohol-dependent parents and others concerned about their welfare. Call 0800 358 3456. [www.nacoa.org.uk/](http://www.nacoa.org.uk/)

**SMART Recovery** groups help participants decide whether they have a problem, build up their motivation to change, and offer a set of proven tools and techniques to support recovery. [www.smartrecovery.org.uk](http://www.smartrecovery.org.uk)