

I WILL*

*drink less

Tips for cutting down

Take the right approach – gradually cutting down is more likely to be something you will stay committed to as opposed to cutting out all alcohol immediately.



Ask for support – tell friends and family that you're cutting down – they might be more supportive than you think. But beware, some people don't like to have their drinking behaviour challenged, so be prepared to defend your decision, or just tell them it's part of your new training programme!

General tips

Keep track of what you're drinking - set a limit for what you're going to drink each day. Remember the recommended guidelines are no more than 3 to 4 units a day for men and no more than 2 to 3 for women, plus 2 days a week alcohol free.

Understand your units – check out the fact sheet 'Units values of popular drinks' so that you understand how many, of your favourite drink, you can have.

Alternate alcoholic drinks with soft drinks - pace yourself by having a soft drink or two after every alcoholic drink. It will also help stop you getting dehydrated.

Anticipating a heavy evening - avoid drinking on an empty stomach and make sure someone else is driving. Then afterwards make sure you go alcohol free for 48 hours to help your body recover.

Be aware of the strength of drinks – drink spritzers if you like wine, or pints of shandy if you prefer beer or lager; you'll get a larger drink, but one that contains less alcohol. If you prefer higher strength lagers, then opt for half pints.

Cutting down at home

Home measures - It's worth buying an alcohol measure for when you drink at home to enable you to better keep a track of how much you're drinking. A really easy way of cutting down for wine drinkers is to buy small (125ml) glasses for the house.

Buying clever - buying beers and wines with a lower alcohol content could make a great difference; and keep a supply of non-alcoholic alternatives for general drinking and entertaining.

Topping up – don't top up your drink as it's hard to keep track of how much you are drinking.

Cutting down when you're out

Leave your debit or credit card at home – that way you can't drink more than your budget allows.

Avoid rounds – don't drink at the fastest drinker's pace. Take control and be prepared to say 'NO'.

Small is better – make the recommended number of units go further by drinking beer and lager by the bottle or halves and wine by the smallest glass available.

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Tips for cutting down contd

Other ideas for cutting down when you're out:

- Going out a bit later or just having your first drink later.
- Replacing some of your drinks with non-alcoholic or low alcohol drinks.
- Avoiding the quick drink situation - missing out the one at lunchtime or after work can make a huge difference over the week.
- Having at least two alcohol free days - take up a new interest if you find most of your social life revolves around the pub.
- Drinking longer drinks, and drinking more slowly.

The benefits of cutting down

Remember the short and long term effects of cutting down on alcohol. Drinking less reduces the long term risks of serious diseases such as cancer, liver disease and stroke. In terms of the here and now, cutting down on alcohol will improve the condition of your skin; have a positive effect on your sleep; and can even boost your sex life.

Stress levels

Some people drink to relax, but in reality alcohol can make you feel even more anxious. Try not to make alcohol key to your after work wind down, and try alternative stress-busters like exercise, having a relaxing bath, or listening to relaxing music.

Weight

Remember alcoholic drinks carry a lot of calories, so cutting down on the amount you drink will have a significant impact on your weight and shape.

