

change
4 life

don't let drink sneak up on you

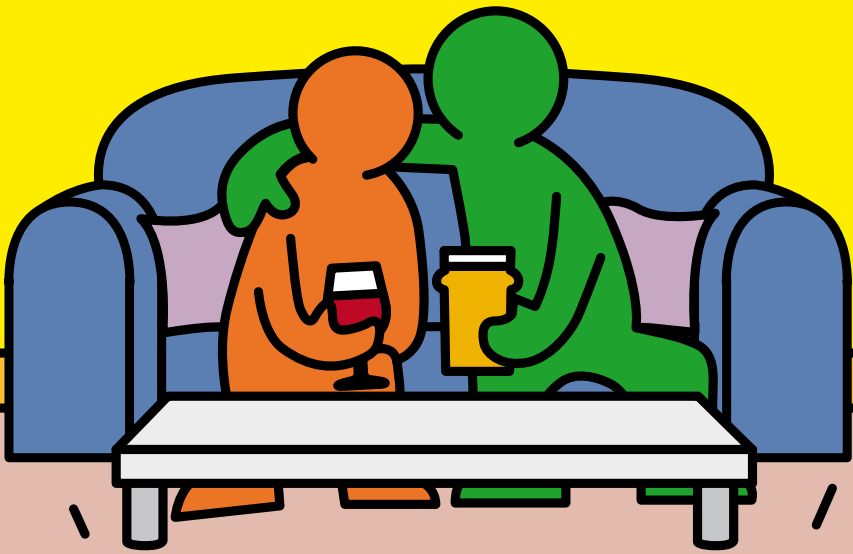
how to catch it out
and cut back



a couple of glasses at home. a few after work... drink can sneak up on us

After a long day, many of us like to unwind with a nice glass of something. But it's funny how drink sneaks up on us. The odd glass in the evening can quickly become two or three regular glasses, most evenings.

The trouble is that drink sneaks up on our organs too, giving the body a hard time. Regularly drinking over the guidelines* can lead to serious health problems, from liver damage to a greater risk of getting cancer or having a heart attack.



cutting down doesn't have to mean giving up

The good news is there's no need to stop drinking alcohol altogether. All you really need to do is to stick within the guidelines below. There's one for women and one for men. No one can say that drinking alcohol is absolutely safe, but by keeping within these guidelines, there's only a low risk of causing harm in most circumstances.

This booklet will help. Over the following pages, you'll be able to check how much you drink and see whether it's too much. You'll also find lots of tips to help you cut back.

A new, improved you

Cutting back on alcohol also helps with your general well-being. You'll probably notice the benefits quite quickly.

- Feeling better in the mornings.
- Having more energy and feeling less tired during the day.
- Your skin may start to look better.
- You'll start to feel in better shape.
- You may stop gaining weight or lose some pounds.

*Lower-risk guidelines

Women should not regularly drink more than 2 to 3 units a day.

Men should not regularly drink more than 3 to 4 units a day.

Medical Warning: If you have physical withdrawal symptoms (like shaking, sweating or feeling anxious until you have a first drink of the day), you should take medical advice before stopping completely – as it can be dangerous to do this too quickly without proper advice and support.

a little more can do a lot of harm to your body

Regularly drinking over the lower-risk guidelines on most days of the week will increase the chances of doing serious harm. It's that extra glass or two in the evening, most evenings, that can do all the damage.

What do we mean by serious harm?

There are many different ways alcohol can damage our bodies. The problem is, drink sneaks up on us – its hidden harms usually only surface after a number of years. And for those who already have a medical condition (such as high blood pressure or diabetes) or are suffering from depression or anxiety, alcohol often makes life worse.

Most people with drink-related health problems aren't addicted to alcohol.

They're simply people who have regularly drunk more than the guidelines for some years.

a few 'harmless' drinks?

Did you know that regularly drinking over the lower-risk guidelines increases the chances of suffering from any of the conditions on this page? The more you drink, the greater the risks.

- Cancer of the mouth, throat, oesophagus or larynx
- Breast cancer in women
- A stroke
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Liver disease
- Pancreatitis
- Reduced fertility

Drinking less now can make a big difference to your health later on.

Two large glasses of wine (ABV 13%) or more a day could make you three times more likely to get mouth cancer.

A spare tyre



If you drink ten pints a week, you could be taking on more than 120,000 calories each year.



Find out more about alcohol's harms.
Go to www.nhs.uk/Change4Life

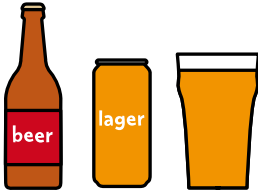
how much is too much?

It's easy to make sure your drinking isn't increasing the chances of seriously damaging your health. Simply stick within the following lower-risk guidelines.

Women	should not regularly* drink more than 2 to 3 units of alcohol a day	That's no more than a standard 175ml glass of wine (ABV 13%)	
Men	should not regularly* drink more than 3 to 4 units of alcohol a day	That's no more than a pint of strong lager, beer or cider (ABV 5.2%)	

*regularly means drinking this amount most days or every day of the week

Counting the units (ABV is the percentage of alcohol in the drink)




440ml can of regular lager, beer or cider (ABV 4.5%) **2 units**

330ml bottle of strong lager, beer or cider (ABV 5.2%) **1.7 units**

500ml bottle of stronger cider (ABV 7.5%) **3.8 units**

Pint of strong lager, beer or cider (ABV 5.2%) **3 units**

Pint of extra strong lager, beer or cider (ABV 8%) **4.5 units**



Glass of red, white or rosé wine (ABV 13%)

Small 125ml **1.6 units**

Standard 175ml **2.3 units**

Large 250ml **3.3 units**

750ml bottle of red, white or rosé wine (ABV 13.5%) **10 units**

Other drinks

- 25ml single spirit and mixer (ABV 40%) **1 unit**
- 50ml glass of sherry or other fortified wine (ABV 20%) **1 unit**
- 50ml glass of liqueur (ABV 20%) **1 unit**
- 275ml bottle of alcopop (ABV 5.5%) **1.5 units**

catch drink out

Try jotting down what you drank over the last week. Then, see if you're drinking over the lower-risk guidelines. Try to be honest. If that wasn't really a typical week, adjust the daily amount for a more realistic picture. Adding up what you normally drink can really help if you need to cut back.

Day	Type of drink	Number of drinks	Units	Total units for the day
Example	440ml can of lager (ABV 4.5%) Small 125ml glass of red wine (ABV 13%)	2 cans 1 glass	4 (2+2) 1.6	5.6
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Or check your drinking online – simply search for Change4Life.

get sneaky and cut back

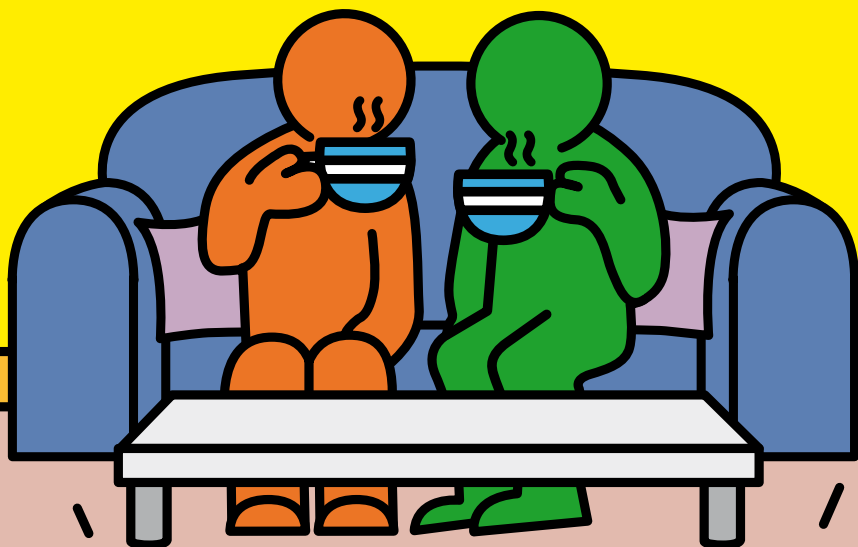
If you're above the guidelines, why not start straight away? There are many different ways you can cut back on drinking. Simply pick what best suits you and, if that doesn't work, try something else on the list.

Drink-free days

Most people don't drink alcohol every day, but if you do, try having some days off when you don't drink at all. This is a simple way to cut your regular drinking. Just make sure you don't increase the amount you drink on the other days.

Keep track of your drinking

Whether you're at home or out, make sure you know how many units you've drunk so you can keep yourself within the lower-risk guidelines.



Swap your usual for...

A smaller drink

You can still enjoy a drink, just have less. Try a smaller bottle of beer over a can or a small glass of wine rather than a large one. Wine glasses today are bigger than ever and can easily hold a third of a bottle.

A lower-strength drink

Instead of a strong beer or wine, go for one with a lower alcohol content (ABV).

A drink with a mixer

Adding a mixer will make your drink last longer.

A soft drink or a glass of water

Take a break between drinking and have a soft drink or glass of water, which will also help you stay hydrated.

A later drink

To help manage the amount you drink, try starting a bit later than usual. And if you're going out, don't drink at home beforehand.

A drink with a meal only

Try only drinking at home with your main meal. And not before or after you've eaten.

A cup of tea or coffee

When you get the urge to pour yourself a glass, put the kettle on and enjoy a cuppa instead. The chances are you won't feel like an alcoholic drink afterwards.

find other ways to wind down

If you drink to unwind, try finding other ways to relax. Taking yourself out of the home or where you usually drink may also help. Here are some ideas:

Pamper yourself with a bath

Sip a cup of herbal tea

Rediscover your music collection

Catch up with an old friend over the phone

Walk the dog

Start a new hobby – the options are endless!

Go for a run, a swim or a bike ride

Join a club, gym or five-a-side team

Treat the family to a day out



Reward yourself

It's not always easy cutting back, so with all the money you'll be saving by drinking less, why not treat yourself? Go to the cinema. Make some home improvements. Enjoy a day out or a nice meal...

tips for a night out

Drinking socially in a large group can be tricky if you're trying to cut back. Here are some suggestions to help out.

Make a plan

Before you start drinking, set yourself a limit on how much you're going to drink.

Set yourself a budget

Only take out a set amount of money to spend on alcohol.

Start later

Turn up later and you can drink less. But don't drink at home before you go out.

Take your time

Don't feel pressured to keep up with others.

Give it a miss

If someone's getting a round, don't feel like you have to have a drink.

Sit one out

Buy yourself a soft drink when it's your round.

Replace your usual

Try a smaller glass or a lower-strength drink or add a mixer.

A ready-made excuse

You can always tell your friends you're cutting back on drinking to watch your weight. That one always works.

Stay hydrated

Drink a pint of water before you start drinking and avoid using alcohol to quench your thirst.

Units don't work like reward points

You can't store them up for a big night out. Drinking large amounts in one go does additional physical damage.

What's drink costing you?

You can check how much you're drinking anytime online. You can also see how many units of alcohol are in the most common types of drinks. You can choose by size, alcohol percentage (ABV) and the number of drinks you've had. And don't forget that, by drinking less, you'll save money too.

Stop drink sneaking up on you

Visit our website for more tips and advice

Simply search Change4Life online

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