



Cutting back on alcohol

fare.

Reducing the amount of alcohol you drink has significant health benefits. Drinking less alcohol can improve your mood, energy, sleep and concentration. It can also reduce your risk of health problems, such as cancer and other diseases.

What can I do if I want to cut back on alcohol?

There are external factors that influence whether and how much you drink. Sometimes these factors can make it harder to cut back. This can include the availability of alcohol and constant alcohol marketing and the drinking patterns of your loved ones and friends, as well as your social routines.

If you are drinking at a level that is putting your health at risk, or if you want to reduce your alcohol intake, it can be helpful to be prepared with strategies that can support you to cut back.

Here are some tips and tools that can help.

Know your standard drinks and keep track of your alcohol intake

The [Australian Alcohol Guidelines](#) recommend having no more than 10 standard drinks a week and no more than 4 standard drinks on any one day, to reduce the health risks from alcohol.

A standard drink may be less than you think. The number of standard drinks in a serve of alcohol depends on the alcohol volume (strength) and the size of the serve. A standard drink equates to 10 grams of pure alcohol.

- One small glass (middy or pot) of full-strength beer contains 1.1 standard drinks.
- An average sized glass of wine in a restaurant (150ml) contains about 1.6 standard drinks for white wine, and 1.8 standard drinks for red wine.
- One nip (30ml shot glass) of spirits contains 1 standard drink

Every alcohol product in Australia is required to be labelled with the number of standard drinks that it contains. For more information on standard drinks, see FARE's information sheet *Keeping track of standard drinks* or visit fare.org.au/resources.

This [Drinks Meter](#) app is a useful tool to help you keep track of your alcohol intake.

By counting standard drinks and making a conscious note of how many you are having, you will be more aware of the amount you consume daily and be more likely to stay within the Australian Alcohol Guidelines.

Alcohol-free days

Committing to having alcohol-free days each week can be a great way to reduce the amount you drink.

Having alcohol-free days can be a useful circuit breaker if you need to reset habits and reduce how often you drink.

Alcohol-free days can also help support healthy daily habits that don't involve alcohol, such as exercise or eating well.

Limit the amount of alcohol you have at home and avoid prompts to buy alcohol

At home, one way to reduce the amount of alcohol you drink is to make it less available. You can limit the amount of alcohol you have at home. Purchase only small amounts of alcohol so you can stick to drinking limits you have set.

Alcohol advertising can be everywhere. You can unfollow or opt out from alcohol advertising online, and delete apps from your phone that might prompt you to buy alcohol online and have it delivered.

Need advice or support?

To find a local GP, you can call **1800 022 222** or visit healthdirect.gov.au.

If you need other support to reduce your drinking, you can contact the National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline on **1800 250 015**.

Consider your social routines and influences

Social rituals and routines with friends and family can have a strong influence on how or whether you drink. Catch-ups with friends can involve alcohol, and it can be difficult if friends assume you will be drinking. Simple changes in how you socialise and being mindful of these influences can help you avoid alcohol or cut back.

It can be helpful to socialise in places where drinking is less of a focus or not a consideration. Make plans to catch-up with people during the day instead of the night and suggest a café instead of a bar or pub as a location. Meeting a friend for a walk or other exercise is a great way to catch up without any focus on alcohol.

You shouldn't need to make excuses not to drink but it can feel challenging if you are questioned. It can help to have a few ready-made answers about why you are not drinking or don't want another drink.

This can be as straight-forward as saying, "No thanks, I'm not drinking" or, "I'm cutting back on alcohol".

Other options could be saying that you want to have a clear head, a good night's sleep or that you have an early start the next day.

Set goals and make a plan

Setting goals and making a plan can motivate you to reduce the amount you drink and help you stay on track.

Your goals might be to have more alcohol-free days per week, or to stick to a weekly drinking limit.

It can be helpful to make a plan to avoid triggers to drink and to develop strategies to overcome these. For example, a trigger might be when you are feeling tired or stressed. Going for a walk might be an effective strategy to avoid drinking.

It can also help to think about people or services you can turn to if you need support to stick to your goals.

Create a support network

Cutting back on drinking is easier with a support network by your side. Sharing your plan to reduce or give up alcohol gives your family and friends the opportunity to help you out. You may even find someone has the same goal and has been reluctant to discuss it.

By being open about your intention to cut back or stop drinking alcohol, you also become more accountable, which may help provide the motivation you need to keep going.

A support network can also be an online community. By joining online communities such as [Hello Sunday Morning](#) and [Sober in the Country](#), you can connect with others who are cutting back or giving up alcohol and tap into what is working for others.

There are apps that can support you to reduce or give up drinking and keep track of your alcohol intake. Two apps worth checking out are [Daybreak](#) and [Drinks Meter](#).

Remember the benefits

Keeping the benefits of cutting back or giving up alcohol top-of-mind can provide the incentive to keep going when you need it most.

Remember that reducing your alcohol intake not only lowers your risk of health problems such as cancer and heart disease, it can also increase your energy, improve your sleep and mood, and save you money.

See your doctor

A doctor is a great source of advice and support for cutting down on or giving up alcohol.

By checking in with your doctor you can seek advice, discuss any concerns, and understand the positive impact reducing alcohol has on your health.

To find a local GP go to healthdirect.gov.au or call 1800 022 222.

Other support services

If you need other support to reduce your drinking, you can contact the National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline on 1800 250 015.

For more support services, see FARE's information sheet *Alcohol Support Services* or visit fare.org.au/support.

Tips for limiting your alcohol intake

If you are in a situation where you or others are drinking, here are some strategies that can help you reduce the amount of alcohol you drink.

1. Set a limit on the number of drinks you plan to have, and be mindful of the number of standard drinks in each serve.
2. Drink slowly. For every alcoholic drink have a glass of water or soft drink.
3. Choose drinks without alcohol or with lower alcohol content.
4. Choose smaller serving sizes or don't pour a full glass.
5. Avoid top-ups, and don't say yes to another drink if you haven't finished the one you are drinking.
6. If you are going out, offer to be the designated driver and make sure you stay under the legal blood alcohol level for driving.