

Information from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
(<http://www.camh.net>)

Dealing with Drinking - How to quit or cut down.

Most people who drink alcohol think of themselves as "moderate" or "social drinkers". But drinking involves risks and, for some, it can lead to problems.

What is problem drinking?

It's when drinking begins to interfere with your life.

For example, you may:

- be repeatedly late for work
- get lower grades at school
- have arguments with family or friends
- develop health concerns
- be charged with impaired driving

If you are experiencing any of these problems, or if you're concerned about your drinking, you should think about quitting or cutting down.

What is moderate drinking?

All drinking is risky. If you don't want to run risks, don't drink. If you do drink, cut your risks.

Remember, drinking should never interfere with:

- your health
- your job
- your studies
- your relationships
- your safety
- the safety of others

Six Steps to moderate drinking

For many people, moderate drinking can be part of a healthy lifestyle. To reduce your risk of problems, keep the following rules in mind:

1. Keep track

It's a good idea to monitor your drinking. Keep track every day.

- How much are you drinking?
- How do you avoid drinking too much?

2. Pace yourself

Moderate drinking means mixing days of no drinking with days of low drinking.

If you choose to drink:

- Measure your drinks.
- Dilute them with water, soft drinks, or juice.
- Sip, don't gulp.
- Alternate your drinks with water, soft drinks, or juice.
- Eat a snack with your drinks.
- Wait a while between each drink.

3. Spend time on other things

Instead of drinking, spend some time on other things you enjoy.

- Go for a walk.
- See a movie.
- Read a book.
- Listen to music.
- Take up a hobby.
- Join a club.

4. Stay alert

There may be times when you feel pressure to drink. Learn to:

- Plan ahead and set personal limits.
- Resist temptation. (Tell yourself, "I don't want to ruin my record," "I can have fun without drinking," or "I don't want to wake up with a hang-over.")
- Refuse drinks without feeling guilty. (Remember, it's okay to say "no thanks".)
- Leave if you are having trouble saying "no".

5. Don't use alcohol to escape

Alcohol can't solve your problems. Don't use alcohol to feel better or to deal with difficult situations. Instead of drinking, try to:

- Talk about your feelings
- Voice your opinion
- Show affection
- Assert yourself

6. Never drink and drive

Even small amounts of alcohol can affect your ability to drive or operate heavy equipment safely. If you drink, don't drive! Take a bus or taxi home or get a lift with a friend who hasn't been drinking.

Other times to say "no"

For some people, even moderate alcohol use can be dangerous. If you have medical or psychiatric problems, or take certain prescription or non-prescription drugs, ask your doctor or therapist for advice. Women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy should avoid drinking.

Need help?

If you're having trouble dealing with your drinking, don't be shy. Talk to a friend or ask a professional for help.