



How can I reduce my drinking over the Christmas period?

The run up to Christmas can sometimes feel like an endless drinking session, with party after party, and lots of excuses to crack open a bottle. If you feel like you might overdo it and want to pace yourself over the holidays, check out the Q&A below, with Alcohol Change UK's Director for Wales.

Is it worthwhile to make a plan in advance at a party to avoid one drink leading to one more?

It's not always easy to know how much you're going to drink in an evening, but you probably know what feels like enough for you and what feels like too much. Certainly, if you think you've reached your limit, don't let anyone else cajole you into drinking more. If it helps you to make a plan - for example, "I won't drink more than three glasses of wine and I'll have a glass of water between each" - by all means do!

Should you stick to your own booze?

The only reason for sticking with the booze you brought with you would be to avoid drinking too much, say if you brought four cans of beer because you don't want any more than that.

Are there strategies to avoid feeling rude at a work party/family event if you don't want another drink?

It's funny how we sometimes think it's OK to put pressure on family, friends or colleagues to have more alcohol. There really is nothing rude about saying politely that you've had enough.

What are some strategies to slow down or stop yourself getting too drunk?

Christmas is a time when we often start drinking earlier in the day, which is a sure recipe for drinking more, so it may be wise to lay off the booze until later in the day. Think about how you're feeling and whether you want a pause, and don't let people top you up just because they're drinking.

One great tip that we love is to think about your real festive pleasures and enjoy those, while cutting out the drinking that isn't a pleasure - the drinking that might make you feel unwell or guilty afterwards. So if you love a glass of mulled wine, look forward to and enjoy that, while ditching anything unnecessary that will spoil your enjoyment of the season.

Should people be bearing Government guidelines in mind? Is it ok to exceed them for a special occasion?

The guidelines are just that - guidelines, not rules. It's up to us as adults how closely we follow them, but generally it's not a good idea to drink more than the recommended maximum of 5 or 6 pints of beer or 1½ bottles of wine in any one week. That's because over this level our risks of alcohol-related health problems increase - and alcohol use is the leading risk factor for death for people aged 15-49 in the UK.

Does taking a few days off from drinking help with health and mental state or is it more important to focus on drinking more moderately in general?

Your body will be grateful for any break you can give it from having to process and get rid of alcohol from your system, but long-term moderation is the key. Taking some time off can also help remind you that you don't need alcohol to have fun, and give you some practice saying no, which will come in handy when you don't fancy a drink in future. That's the whole idea behind Dry January - it helps you reset your relationship with alcohol. And actually, people who sign up to Dry January continue to drink less riskily even six months later.

Beer, wine or spirits?

The only thing that really makes a difference is the alcoholic strength. Some people do stick to beer as it's less alcoholic than wine. As a general rule, the stronger the drink, the easier it is to overdo it. So, if you're going for the spirits, it's worth keeping a closer eye on how much you're pouring yourself.

Any other tips?

It may be an idea to avoid drinking in rounds, or you'll end up drinking as much as the biggest drinker. So long as you pay for your own round, you can sit out some of the others or have a non-alcoholic drink. This will also help you to avoid a hangover.

Alcohol-free beers have a bad reputation but they've improved massively over the last few years, with some expert brewers from the UK and Europe getting in on the act. They're still hard to find in some pubs, but have a snoop around your local supermarket - many of the major shops now have a special section for them. You can read our reviews of them, and other alcohol alternatives, [here](#).

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