

A Little Something to Think About!

Although you might think that alcohol is a stimulant, it is in fact a depressant drug. Depressant drugs tend to exaggerate how you're feeling to start out with e.g. if you drink because you feel down, it will make you more depressed.

Many people drink alcohol to boost their confidence. Whilst it might seem that it works, over use of alcohol actually has the opposite effect.

A 'blackout' is when you remain conscious but can't remember fully what you did or said. Whilst many people joke about this happening, it is serious and a definite sign that you have drunk too much.

Alcohol causes much more damage to individuals, families and society than heroin and all other illegal drugs put together.

A little something to think about!

Drinking too much alcohol, too often, not only damages your liver, it has effects on virtually every part of your body. See the 'alcohol and the body' information pack for more details.

Some people say that they drink to 'get away from things' or 'forget their worries'. Alcohol blots out worrying thoughts temporarily but the worries are still there. Unfortunately, if you drink heavily you're much less able to think through solutions clearly.

Planning to have a family? Alcohol affects both men and women's fertility and performance. If you are currently pregnant, remember that even moderate amounts of alcohol affect your developing baby.

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Enough Bottle?

If drinking is causing problems in your life, it can be a good idea to stop drinking alcohol altogether, especially if:

- **You have been unable to cut down for any length of time**
- **You have been advised by your doctor not to drink**
- **You have a physical or mental health condition which is made worse by alcohol**



**This is a general information leaflet.
For advice on stopping drinking,
consult your doctor or local alcohol
service**



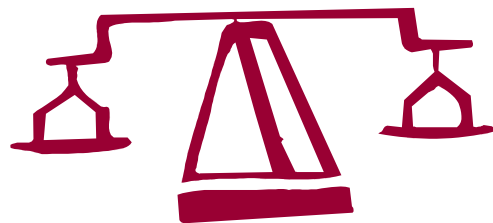
Tips for Coping with Change

Deciding to Stop

If you're thinking about stopping drinking, then it's probably causing some problems in your life already. People stop drinking for many different reasons. Consider and list the reasons why you want to stop.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

It can be useful to weigh up the pros and cons of your drinking and make a decision on what to do.



Have you ever felt the need to cut down on your drinking?

Has anyone annoyed or angered you by criticising your drinking?

Have you ever felt guilty about your drinking?

Have you ever had an eye opener, i.e. drinking first thing to steady yourself?

(Answering yes to two or more of the above indicates a developing alcohol problem)

Stopping

Coming off Alcohol

If you have been drinking heavily, it can be risky to stop drinking suddenly. You may start to have withdrawal symptoms. These symptoms can range from mild to severe and it varies from person to person. It's advisable to discuss stopping drinking with your doctor. A course of medication can be prescribed if necessary, which will reduce the severity of any withdrawal symptoms you might get.

Dealing with Cravings / Urges

Many people experience a strong desire to resume drinking after they have stopped for a while. This is normal and is to be expected. There are ways you can deal with this such as:

- Delay for a few minutes and the craving will pass
- Distract yourself from thinking about drinking
- Drink a glass of water or juice
- Deep breathing slowly

Watch out for your triggers

A trigger is something that might remind you of drinking or encourage you in some way to drink. Triggers can include people such as ex drinking buddies, places, such as pubs or at home, physical feelings such as hunger and thirst and emotions such as fear, anger. Events like parties, funerals and celebrations can also be high risk times.

Reward yourself

It takes effort to make changes. If you have kept to your goal of not drinking, treat yourself to something with the money you have saved (non alcoholic of course!).

Cut down on the temptation to drink

It makes sense to limit your contact with alcohol both at home and whilst out, particularly in the early stages. For most people, this includes not using low/no alcohol beers. After all, why would you drink something that looks, smells and tastes like the very thing your trying to stop using?

Use Reminders

It's helpful to remind yourself of your reasons for stopping drinking. These reasons may change slightly over time e.g. if you stop drinking because of a crisis, and then the crisis passes, what other reasons have you to stay stopped?

Get Help

This can be from friends, family, your doctor and / or support groups . It is always advisable to consult with your doctor if you intend to stop . It might also be helpful to contact your local alcohol service and arrange an appointment..

Eat a good diet and take some exercise

Chances are, if you've been drinking heavily, you've probably not been eating well. Now that you've stopped, try to eat a balanced diet and take some exercise.

Be open to trying new things

Drinking may have played a large part in your life and now that you've decided to stop, you might feel at a loss of what to do with your spare time.. Why not try out things that you haven't done in a while or do something new and different..

Be Patient with yourself

Real and lasting change takes time.

Treatment Options

You may decide to get further help with stopping drinking. The first port of call is your doctor. After this, you can get additional help. Both out-patient options and residential options are available.