

**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.