

At-Risk Drinking:

Tips for Cutting Down on Your Drinking

Below are some tips and tricks that have helped others cut down on their drinking. Some of these may be helpful to you, while others may not work. The key to cutting down is to find something that does work for you. Try some of the tips below. If one doesn't work, try another until you find one that helps.

- **Set a Goal:** Write down how many drinks you want to drink per day. And how many days a week you want to drink. Writing down your goals can help remind you that you want to limit your drinking. People who drink within the recommended guidelines have much lower risk of developing problems.
- **Count Your Drinks:** Taking time to write down how many drinks you have may also help you cut down your drinking. Use a handwritten note and keep in your wallet. Or record your drinks on your smartphone. Do whatever works best for you.
- **Measure Your Drinks:** If you are going to count how many drinks you have, make sure you count correctly. Learn what counts as a standard drink. This way you can correctly measure how many you have had.
- **Pace Yourself:** Some drinkers who try to cut down are able to do it by pacing their drinking. Sip your drinks slowly. Or have only one drink per hour. People who drink quickly are more likely to develop alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence.
- **Space Your Drinks:** Drink something non-alcoholic between drinks that have alcohol. Try having a glass of water, juice or soda between your alcoholic drinks. This can reduce the amount of alcohol you drink.
- **Don't Forget to Eat:** For some drinkers, eating food will reduce their craving for alcohol. This is not true for everyone. But if eating something reduces your craving for a drink, make sure you eat a meal at times when you usually drink. This might help you reduce the amount you drink. Of course, it is not wise for anyone to drink on an empty stomach.
- **Avoid Your Triggers:** You may be trying to cut down or quit drinking altogether. Either way, it is a good idea to avoid situations in which you are used to drinking. Certain things can be triggers that cause you to have an urge to drink. Triggers can be people, places, things and certain activities. Staying away from your triggers can help prevent you from drinking.
- **Do Something Else:** Drinking may be a big part of your life. Try doing other activities during those times when you might usually drink. Find something that you enjoy doing. This can help occupy the time when you would usually be drinking. Take up a hobby, start exercising, make new friends, or spend more time with your family.
- **Learn How to Say 'No':** Chances are you are going to be in situations where someone is going to offer you a drink. Or they may expect you to drink with them like you have in the past. Learn how to politely say "no thank you," and really mean it. Say it quickly and firmly so that you don't give yourself time to change your mind. You may want to practice what you will say the next time your friends ask you to have a drink.

Sources:

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc., National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)