

Tips on Reducing Alcohol Consumption

When reducing your levels of alcohol consumption, you will likely see the positive impact in many areas of your life, including your physical fitness, stress management, sleep quality, relationship patterns, and overall preventative health. The following list includes strategies that can help you achieve your goal.

- The “[staggering method](#)” involves starting the night with a glass of sparkling water (or other non-alcoholic drink) **before** drinking your first glass of alcohol and then spacing out subsequent glasses of alcohol with a glass of sparkling water in between. This strategy will help reduce the total amount of alcohol you are consuming each evening, while still providing the social aspect of drinking that you enjoy. Using this method could potentially result in up to a 50% decrease in alcohol consumption each evening.
- [Initiate “alcohol free” evenings.](#) You may find it useful to select evenings during the week or over the weekend when you choose to not drink. Following this plan by selecting a non-alcoholic beverage like sparkling water/cranberry juice, instead of a glass of wine or other alcoholic beverage, will help reduce your overall amount of alcohol consumption.
- [Reduce the availability of alcohol](#) in the house by only buying one small bottle of wine or alcohol at a time so that you consume fewer drinks in one evening. You will be less likely to continue drinking if immediate access is restricted. Also, remember you can always use “stoppers” to preserve the contents of a bottle of wine that was opened, so you do not feel like you have to finish the bottle.
- [Self-monitor keep track of exactly how much alcohol you are consuming.](#) Keeping track on a calendar or chart each time you pour a drink will increase your awareness of how much you are drinking and whether drinking is becoming an automated habit. You may also find that selecting a **specific glass** (or measuring exactly one shot) for drinking wine may help to keep track of the total amount you are consuming. You can further self-monitor by **removing the bottle** of wine from the area where you are drinking (for example, by keeping it in the dining room if you are sitting in kitchen), thereby requiring a conscious effort to get up and re-fill your glass.
- [Reducing alcohol consumption in the evenings can reduce disturbed sleep.](#) Although alcohol is a depressant and may initially help you to fall asleep, the subsequent metabolism that clears it from your body while you are sleeping causes a type of withdrawal syndrome. This withdrawal process activates your system later in the night (often the early morning hours), causing wakefulness and is often associated with nightmares and sweats. Of note, it can take 3-4 hours for one glass of alcohol to fully metabolize from your body.

- **Practice brief moments of deep breathing exercises to regulate your anxiety and stress response to daily hassles, which can be triggers for your drinking.** You could incorporate this brief, yet effective stress management technique into a variety of situations including: before bed to release any tension from the day that may interfere with falling, and remaining asleep, before driving home from work to de-stress, in a stressful work or family-related situation to reduce anxiety, or the urge to drink in response to stress.
- **Substitute new more adaptive behaviours for your usual tendency to have a drink.** For example, you might have a glass of water/juice/Perrier while preparing a meal, or exercise/go for a walk in the evenings rather than having that first glass of wine/alcohol (which tends to lead to additional glasses). You could also pursue a new hobby or interest as a more adaptive and pleasurable way of unwinding at the end of the day (e.g., reading.)
- **Examine your commitment to improving your overall health.** Thinking about the potential costs of continuing your current consumption habits (e.g., declining health, weight gain) versus the overall benefits to your personal health and well-being of discontinuing or significantly altering this habit (e.g., more energy, improved health, longer life span), may provide you with additional motivation to achieve your goals of moderating your drinking behaviours.
- **Share your plan with your partner, family member, or friend.** If you share your desire to reduce your alcohol consumption, the support of a loved one can help you to succeed and enhance your overall health. For some people, it's also more effective to write down their goals – and share these written goals with others, as a way to keep themselves accountable.
- **Consumption guidelines, according to Cancer Care Ontario:** **women** should consume no more than 10 drinks per week, no more than one drink per day, and have some days be alcohol-free days. **Men** should drink no more than 15 drinks per week, no more than 2 drinks per day, and have some days be alcohol-free days.

For any additional questions or to schedule an appointment, please contact:

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