

Alcohol: 9 Ways to Cut Back on Drinking

People decide to cut back on alcohol for many different reasons. Whatever your reasons are, it can help to have a plan.

Here are 9 ideas to help you cut back on alcohol.

One. Wait for a moment before you have a drink.

Hitting the pause button gives you a chance to really think about what you want.

Ask yourself if you really want a drink, or if it's just a habit.

If you're used to always having a drink after work, try doing something else at that same time.

Two. Look for substitutes.

Look for non-alcohol drinks you can reach for instead of your usual drink.

Try having flavored seltzer water or tonic with a slice of lime.

Or consider trying alcohol-free beer.

And many bars and restaurants offer mocktails that taste like traditional cocktails but without the alcohol.

Three. Drink more water.

When you're drinking alcohol, try starting out with a glass of water first.

And then have another glass of water between every drink you have.

Four. Downsize your drink.

Try having a bottle of beer instead of a pint.

Use a smaller glass for wine.

And look for drinks with lower alcohol content – like light beer – or use less liquor and add in more mixer for cocktails.

Five. Slow down.

It's easy to drink quickly without thinking much about how it tastes.

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Sip your drink, and take your time enjoying it.

Six. Do the math.

Sometimes the idea of saving money can be a helpful way to stay motivated.

Add up how much you spend on alcohol each month.

Now figure out how much you spend in a year.

Think about how much money you could save if you cut back.

Seven. Take a break.

Try choosing one or two days each week when you won't drink at all.

Think about how you feel on those days.

Did you sleep better? Did you have more energy?

If you notice a difference in how you feel you may even decide to add another non-drinking day to your week.

Eight. Write down your health goals.

Are you hoping to lose some weight? Or maybe you'd like to sleep better, or lower your blood pressure.

Make a list of any goals you have to improve your health, and think about how cutting back on drinking can help you achieve those goals.

Nine. Practice saying no.

Have a plan for how you'll respond if someone offers you a drink and you don't want to have one.

Try saying something like

"Thanks, but I'm cutting back." Or "no thanks, I'm good."

Remember that it's okay to leave sooner than you planned if you're uncomfortable or feeling tempted.

Now that you have some ideas on how to cut back, here's a couple of other things to consider.

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For some people, cutting back isn't enough.

If you're struggling with cutting back or quitting alcohol completely, talk to your doctor.

Together you can go over your options and find the approach that's best for you.

Some people may need medical support or a treatment program to manage the physical process of alcohol withdrawal.

With a plan, time, and your own reasons for cutting back or quitting alcohol completely, you can do what's right for you.