


ENJOYING A DRINK AND STAYING SAFE AS WE GET OLDER

Hints and tips for older
people's groups





If you are worried about yourself or someone you know and don't know what to do, then this information is here to help you. These tips are for older people so you can enjoy alcohol and keep safe.

Most older people have enjoyed a drink throughout their adult lives and know how to look after themselves. But, as we get older, it sometimes becomes harder to find the best balance. This could be for many reasons, such as our bodies now responding differently to alcohol, the medication we are taking or problems we have with our balance or eyesight.

How and when we drink has also changed: now alcohol is cheaper and we are more likely to drink at home and buy alcohol at the supermarket with our other shopping.

The people who helped us develop these hints and tips found that they still enjoyed a drink and they actually enjoyed it more when they knew they were safe.

Local contacts

Steps you can take to look after yourself

- Make sure you are eating properly.
- Think about the times when you drink more. Find something else to do at that time or plan to be with other people.
- Phone a friend or get someone to phone you when you know that a chat would be helpful. You don't even need to mention alcohol if you don't want to.
- Try to avoid people who drink more than you would like.
- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about whether it is safe to take alcohol with your medication.

Look at your home and how safe it is if you do have a stumble, which is helpful to do regardless of how much you drink.

Hints on how to drink less alcohol in your home

- Try using smaller wine glasses or an alcohol measure so you know how much you have had to drink.
- Don't use alcohol to quench your thirst – drink water or soft drinks if you are thirsty.
- It is good to have two or three days in the week when you do not have any alcohol.

- Have alcohol with food and only drink while you are eating.
- Have a jug of water on the table as well as alcohol and try to alternate between water/soft drinks and alcohol.
- Try to replace the alcohol in your fridge with soft drinks.
- Remember that wine doesn't go off overnight – get a good stopper and it will last a lot longer. Leftover wine can also be frozen and used in cooking.

Hints on how to drink less alcohol outside your home

- Drink water or soft drinks before you go out so you are not thirsty.
- Try not to drink in rounds as this can make you drink faster than you realise or would like.
- Space out your drinks or drink a soft drink or two between each alcoholic drink.
- Try a more diluted alcoholic drink such as a spritzer or a shandy, or drink wine or beer with less alcohol in.
- Watch out for cocktails – they contain more alcohol than you might think.
- You may need to be ready to say 'no thanks' to people. It can help if you practise doing this so you feel confident and are less likely to be bothered about any questions.

Signs to watch out for

It might be helpful to look out for signs that you, or someone you know, could be drinking more than is healthy. There may be other reasons for these signs too, such as health problems that should be checked out.

- Generally feeling bad and less able to cope after having a drink.
- Looking a bit unkempt, smelling of alcohol or skipping having a wash or shave more often than before.
- Getting up later in the mornings or missing or forgetting appointments
- Getting short of money or being behind paying bills when money has been used to buy alcohol.
- Behavioural changes – people can get quite grumpy when they are drinking and then when they haven't had a drink.
- Bruising on the body, as alcohol thins the blood and puts us off balance so we fall and bump into things more easily.

If you are worried about someone

It can be very difficult to know what to do if you are worried about someone who is drinking too much alcohol as most of us don't like to interfere. Here are things you can do:

- Have a chat with the person and show concern: "I'm worried about you."
- Use positive language and open questions.
- Talk to a family member or friend who can help you raise the topic.
- Talk to someone like your doctor who you feel you trust if you want general advice about someone's well-being.

outside the box

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www.otbds.org/projects/older-people-and-alcohol/