

Tips for Reducing Risky Drinking

Small changes can make a big difference in reducing your chances of having alcohol related problems. Here are some strategies to try to reduce your risky drinking. If one strategy doesn't work, try another.

1 Keep track of how much you drink

Making note of each drink before you drink it may help you slow down when needed. Find a way that works for you:

- Carry a drinking tracker card in your wallet
- Make check marks on a calendar
- Enter notes on your phone

2 Count and measure

Know the standard drink sizes so you can count your drinks accurately. Measure your drinks at home. Away from home, it can be hard to keep track how many servings of alcohol is in your drink, especially with mixed drinks. At times, you may be getting more alcohol that you think.

3 Set goals

Decide how many days you want to drink and how many drinks you'll have on those day. Plan to have days when you don't drink. People who stay within the low-risk limits when drinking alcohol have the lowest rated of alcohol-related problems.

4 Find alternatives

Fill your free time by developing new, healthy activities, hobbies, and relationships, or renewing ones you've missed. If you have used alcohol to feel more comfortable in social situations, manage your moods, or cope with problems; seek other healthy ways to deal with those areas of your life.

5 Avoid your "triggers"

- If certain people or places make you drink even when you don't want to, try to avoid them
- If certain activities, times of day, or feelings trigger you to drink, plan something else to do instead of drinking
- If drinking at home is a problem, keep little or no alcohol there

6 Plan how to handle urges

When an urge hits, consider these options:

- Remind yourself of your reasons for changing
- Talks things through with someone you trust
- Get involved with a healthy, distracting activity
- Accept the urge. Ride it out without giving in, know it will pass

7 Know your "no"

You're likely to be offered a drink at times when you don't want one. Have a polite, convincing "no, thanks" ready. The faster you can say no to these offers, the less likely you are to give in. If you hesitate, it allows you time to think of excuses to go along. Also, see the short module to help you build drink refusal skills.

For more information visit
www.RethinkingDrinking.niaaa.nih.gov