

# Safer Drinking Steps

Here are some tips to keep you safer and healthier no matter how you choose to change your drinking. Consider picking at least one thing on the list to try.

Graphic adapted from: Collins SE, et al. Combining behavioral harm-reduction treatment and extended-release naltrexone for people experiencing homelessness and alcohol use disorder in the USA: a randomised clinical trial. *Lancet Psychiatry*. 2021;8(4):287-300.

## Stay healthier while you drink

Drink water

**Why?** Reduces hangovers

**How?** Drink water while drinking; alternate between water & alcohol

Count your drinks

**Why?** Helps you think about how much you really want or need

**How?** Keep bottlecaps and count them later. Keep track over time to see what amount works best for you.

Try to eat

**Why?** Food eases the pace of alcohol entering the bloodstream so that it does less harm. Food also gives you important nutrients.

**How?** Eat before you start drinking and while you drink. Proteins (meat, cheese, eggs) are especially good choices when you drink.

Take vitamins

**Why?** Drinking can take away important nutrients from your body.

**How?** Try to take B-vitamins (folate, thiamine, B12)

## Make your drinking safer

Avoid nonbeverage alcohol

**Why?** Mouthwash, aftershave, cooking wine, vanilla extract, cleaning spray, sterno contain unpredictable amounts of alcohol and other poisonous ingredients.

**How?** Be sure to drink alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor) if drinking

Drink beer vs malt liquor

**Why?** You might be getting more alcohol than you thought. A 24oz 211 Steel Reserve = 4 12oz regular beers.

**How?** Check labels and try beer with 4-5% alcohol instead, like Bud or Keystone.

Space your drinks

**Why?** Keep the buzz going for longer and avoid the non-so-good things.

**How?** Pace yourself, sip your beer, alternate between alcohol and water.

Avoid mixing drugs

**Why?** Drinking and drugging at the same time can stress your heart and liver and lead to overdose.

**How?** Avoid other drugs when you drink.

Drink in a safe place

**Why?** People can take advantage of you when you're drinking. Drinking in unsafe places can lead to fights, hassles, and arrest.

**How?** Avoid drinking heavily with people you don't trust and drink in places where you feel more in control of your surroundings.

## Change how much you drink

Less is more

**Why?** Most things people like about alcohol occur when they are buzzed not drunk.

**How?** Pace your drinking to keep the buzz going on less drinks. You might ask a friend to help you stick with your limit.

Choose not to use

**Why?** Not drinking—even for a few hours—gives your liver, kidneys, and pancreas a rest and may help avoid other problems.

**How?** Try a few hours of not drinking or one nondrinking day a week. To stop completely, medical detox might help.

Avoid withdrawal

**Why?** Alcohol withdrawal—shakes, seizures, or DTs—can be serious.

**How?** If you want to stop drinking and get more than a little shaky if you don't drink, medical detox is safest. If you choose to drink, alcohol can relieve withdrawal symptoms.