



SAFER USE STRATEGIES: ALCOHOL

Here are some tips to help you stay safer and healthier no matter how you choose to change your drinking. Using safer does not mean that you remove all risks, including death, but it can help reduce substance-related harm. You are worth it!

<i>Ways to stay healthier when you drink</i>	Drink water	WHY? Staying hydrated reduces hangover effects. HOW? Drink water while you are drinking alcohol. Alternate between water and alcohol.
	Count your drinks	WHY? Keeping track of the number and timing of your drinks helps you think through how much alcohol you need to get the effect you want. HOW? Keep your bottlecaps, can tabs, etc. in your pocket.
	Try to eat	WHY? Food eases the pace of alcohol entering the bloodstream . HOW? Try to eat before you start drinking and while you drink. Proteins (meat, cheese, beans) and carbs (bread, rice, pasta) are good choices.
	Take vitamins	WHY? Drinking deprives you of nutrients. At high doses, it can harm brain health. HOW? Drink water, take vitamins, esp B-vitamins like folate, thiamine, B-12.
<i>Ways to make your drinking safer</i>	Avoid non-beverage alcohol	WHY? Mouthwash, aftershave, cooking wine, vanilla extract contain unpredictable amounts of alcohol and ingredients not meant to be drunk. HOW? Be sure any beverages consumed are meant for human consumption.
	Drink beer vs malt liquor	WHY? If you drink stronger malt liquors, you might be getting more alcohol than you thought: one 24 oz. malt liquor = well over 3 regular 12 oz beers. HOW? Check the labels and try beer with 4-6% ABV instead.
	Space your drinks	WHY? Keep the buzz going longer; avoid the not-so-good effects of drinking. 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 can lead to overdose. HOW? When you drink, try to avoid other drugs. Know the interaction effects.
	Drink in a safe place	WHY? Drinking in unsafe places can lead to interpersonal or legal issues. HOW? If you can, avoid drinking heavily with people you don't trust. Try to drink in places where you feel more in control of your surroundings.
<i>Ways to change how much you drink</i>	Less is more	WHY? Most things people like about alcohol occur when buzzed, not drunk. HOW? Think of some ways you can limit your drinking, then pace your drinking to keep the buzz going on less drinks.
	Choose not to use	WHY? Not drinking—even for a few hours—gives your liver, kidneys, and pancreas a rest and may avoid dependence or drinking in risky situations. HOW? Try a few hours of not drinking or introducing one non-drinking day a week. To stop altogether, medical detox might help.
	Avoid withdrawal	WHY? Alcohol withdrawal (the shakes, seizures or DTs) can be life-threatening. HOW? If you want to stop drinking and you get more than a little shaky without a drink, medical detox is safest. Tapering slowly can also help relieve withdrawal symptoms; ask your doctor about anti-seizure meds.