

TOOLS FOR MODERATED DRINKING

PACING DRINKING

It's not only how much you drink that is important, but also how quickly you drink. Having 4 drinks in two hours is not the same as having 4 drinks in six hours. Your blood-alcohol level peaks at a lower level if drinks are spaced out over a longer period of time.

Pacing your drinking is a way to keep your blood alcohol at a lower level, thereby reducing the harmful effects of alcohol. Many people choose to have no more than one drink each hour. The following strategies can help you pace your drinks:

- **Measure Your Drinks**
An important thing to do, particularly when drinking at home. It is very easy to drink a large amount of alcohol in a short period of time if wine or liquor isn't measured when pouring drinks. In fact, many people underestimate how many standard drinks they are actually consuming. Measuring allows you to accurately monitor your alcohol intake, so that you can determine whether you are meeting your goal.
- **Track Your Drinks**
Along with measuring your drinks, tracking or counting your drinks during a drinking episode helps you to be sure of how much alcohol you are drinking. There are several mobile app drink trackers available. One recommendation is Primrose Step Away Mobile App: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/primrose-step-away-mobile/id1076472422?mt=8>
- **Dilute drinks**
Having drinks mixed with water or another non-alcoholic beverage allows you to pace your drinking easier. A twelve ounce beer or a five ounce glass of wine has as much alcohol as a single shot of liquor. (Remember, too, that many cocktails contain more than one shot, and can be the equivalent of as many as 2, 3, or more standard drinks.)
- **Alternate Alcoholic and Nonalcoholic Drinks**
One easy way to maintain your goal for reducing your drinking is to switch back and forth from alcoholic drinks to non-alcoholic drinks (like water, seltzer, soda, fruit juice, or even virgin cocktails).
- **Avoid Drinking on an Empty Stomach**
Alcohol is absorbed much more quickly if consumed on an empty stomach. If you eat a meal before drinking or eat while drinking, you can manage your blood alcohol level much more easily.

PLAN AHEAD TO AVOID HEAVY DRINKING

In situations where alcohol is readily available, many people find it tough to stick to their intended limit. This is also true in situations when people feel pressured to drink. Planning in advance how to deal with the pressure in social situations can help.

- **Set a limit in advance**
Before starting drinking on any occasion, you should always decide on a maximum number of drinks you will have, or whether you will drink at all.
- **Enlist Support**
Ask someone you trust to help you stay on target. He or she may help you by giving you “half” drinks or non-alcohol drinks, or by reminding you of your limit.
- **Practice Self Monitoring**
Find a simple way to keep an accurate count of the drinks you consume. There are many phone apps to help keep track of the number of drinks you have.
- **Plan Effective Ways of Saying “No”**
 - Saying “No” to yourself: Place a reminder in your pocket or on your phone about your goal and the reasons for it, and look at it often throughout the night. (Even better, set an alert for your phone to remind you at different points throughout the night.)
 - Saying “No” to others: You may want to use different approaches, one for people you know and another for those you have just met.
 - Have a good excuse on hand to get you off the hook. For instance, *“No thanks, I’m driving”* or *“I have an early morning tomorrow, so I’m not drinking (anymore) tonight.”*

Things to remember:

Abstinence from alcohol and other drugs is the safest choice. No one can guarantee a safe level of drinking that will cause you no harm.

However, if you intend to pursue a goal of moderated drinking, a period of several weeks of abstinence can be very helpful. A period of abstinence allows you to find out what it’s like to live without alcohol, how you feel, and to learn how you have developed problem drinking patterns. A period of abstinence can also help you break your old habits and build confidence about changing your behavior.