GoalTodo

Drink less alcohol: count a week, add dry days, try a dry month

Drink less alcohol

15 weeks · Mon, Nov 30 → Sun, Mar 14

Week by week

Tick a box each time you do a session.

Nov 30–Dec 6
Week 1

Count one ordinary week honestly

Count

- [ ] Write down every drink
  what it was, how big, and when; add up the week in units or standard drinks

Done when: You have a written total for seven days, and you didn't change how you drink to make it look better

Sticking point: Pick a week that is ordinary for you, not a quiet one. A number that is too low makes every later step too easy to mean anything.

Dec 7–13
Week 2

Two drink-free days

Dry days

- [ ] Drink-free day
  no alcohol all day
- [ ] Write down every drink
  what, how big, when

Done when: You had two days this week with no alcohol at all

Sticking point: Start with the days you'd find easiest. You can move them later; what matters is two a week.

Dec 14–20
Week 3

Set a limit before you start

Dry days

- [ ] Drink-free day
  no alcohol all day
- [ ] Decide your limit before the first drink
  a number of drinks, said or written down
- [ ] Write down every drink
  what, how big, when

Done when: You had two drink-free days, and on every day you drank, you set a limit before your first drink

Dec 21–27
Week 4

Same again

Dry days

- [ ] Drink-free day
  no alcohol all day
- [ ] Decide your limit before the first drink
  a number of drinks
- [ ] Write down every drink
  what, how big, when

Done when: Two drink-free days, and you kept to the limits you set

Sticking point: If you went over a limit, think about what led to it: who you were with, where, how you felt. Plan for that next time.

Dec 28–Jan 3
Week 5

Smaller drinks

Dry days

- [ ] Drink-free day
  no alcohol all day
- [ ] Choose the smaller size
  a bottle instead of a pint, a small glass of wine instead of a large one
- [ ] Write down every drink
  what, how big, when

Done when: Two drink-free days, and you compared this week's total with your first week

Jan 4–10
Week 6

Two dry days without thinking about it

Dry days

- [ ] Drink-free day
  no alcohol all day
- [ ] Decide your limit before the first drink
  a number of drinks
- [ ] Write down every drink
  what, how big, when

Done when: This is at least your fifth week in a row with two drink-free days. If it isn't, keep repeating this week until it is

Jan 11–17
Week 7

Get ready for a dry month

Get ready

- [ ] Drink-free day
  no alcohol all day
- [ ] Write down why you drink
  to have fun, to deal with stress, to fall asleep: and what you could do instead
- [ ] Tell friends and family
  the date your dry month starts, and ask if anyone will join you
- [ ] Stock alcohol-free drinks you like
  enough for the first week

Done when: You've picked the start date, told at least one person, and have alcohol-free drinks at home

Sticking point: Look at the calendar for the month ahead. Know now which evenings will be hardest.

Jan 18–24
Week 8

Dry month: week one

Dry month

- [ ] Drink-free day
  no alcohol all day
- [ ] Note how you feel
  a line on sleep and energy

Done when: Seven days with no alcohol this week, or a slip you wrote down and carried on from

Sticking point: Have your "no, thanks" ready before you go out. Polite and short is enough; you don't owe anyone a reason.

Jan 25–31
Week 9

Dry month: week two

Dry month

- [ ] Drink-free day
  no alcohol all day
- [ ] Note how you feel
  a line on sleep and energy

Done when: Another seven days with no alcohol, or a slip you wrote down and carried on from

Feb 1–7
Week 10

Dry month: week three

Dry month

- [ ] Drink-free day
  no alcohol all day
- [ ] Note how you feel
  a line on sleep and energy

Done when: A third week with no alcohol, or a slip you wrote down and carried on from

Sticking point: The middle of the month is when the reason you started feels far away. Read back what you've noticed so far.

Feb 8–14
Week 11

Dry month: the last week

Dry month

- [ ] Drink-free day
  no alcohol all day, to the end of your month
- [ ] Write your plan for after
  your dry days, your limit, and half of your first week's total

Done when: You reach the end of your dry month and your plan for after is written down

Sticking point: If you chose a calendar month, keep going for the few days left after this week.

Feb 15–21
Week 12

After the month: half of where you started

Half

- [ ] Drink-free day
  no alcohol all day
- [ ] Decide your limit before the first drink
  a number of drinks
- [ ] Write down every drink
  what, how big, when

Done when: Your total for the week is no more than half of your first, counted week

Sticking point: It's easy to slip back into old patterns once the month is over. That's what the written plan is for: follow it, not the mood of the evening.

Feb 22–28
Week 13

Half again

Half

- [ ] Drink-free day
  no alcohol all day
- [ ] Decide your limit before the first drink
  a number of drinks
- [ ] Write down every drink
  what, how big, when

Done when: A second week at half or less of your first week's total

Mar 1–7
Week 14

Half, on a busy week

Half

- [ ] Drink-free day
  no alcohol all day
- [ ] Decide your limit before the first drink
  a number of drinks
- [ ] Write down every drink
  what, how big, when

Done when: A third week at half or less, with your dry days moved around your plans if you needed to

Sticking point: Parties and holidays come round again. Decide your limit and have an alcohol-free drink in mind before you arrive.

Mar 8–14
Week 15

Look back and keep going

Keep it up

- [ ] Drink-free day
  no alcohol all day
- [ ] Write down every drink
  what, how big, when
- [ ] Compare with your first week
  the totals, and what you noticed in the dry month

Done when: Your week is at half or less of where you started, and you've chosen how you'll keep counting from here

Milestones

Sun, Dec 6	One honest week counted
Tue, Dec 29	A month of counting, with drink-free days started
Sun, Mar 21	A dry month done, and a plan for after it written
Mon, Nov 29	A year of drinking less

How the plan works

There are four steps, in this order:

1. Count one ordinary week honestly. Write down every drink: what it was, how big, and when. Don't change anything yet. This total is your starting point.

2. Two drink-free days every week. The NHS suggests having several drink-free days each week; two is a modest start. On the days you do drink, decide your limit before the first one.

3. A whole dry month. Once two dry days a week feel normal, take a month off. It's a break, and a chance to look at what alcohol does for you and what you could do instead.

4. Half of what you started with. After the month, aim for a week that adds up to half or less of your counted week. If you counted in January, that's half of what you drank in January.

Keep counting all the way through. A number on paper is harder to argue with than a feeling.

The lengths are GoalTodo's own pacing. No health service puts a number of weeks on these steps. Take each one as long as it needs: if a week didn't go to plan, repeat it rather than move on.

Any step down helps. The CDC puts it simply: drinking less is better for your health than drinking more.

Which level to pick

- I drink a few days a week: you already have days without alcohol, but not on purpose. You count, settle two dry days for about five weeks, then take the dry month.
- I drink most days: you start more gently, with smaller drinks and one dry day before two, and you settle two dry days for longer before the dry month. Read "Before you start" carefully.
- I already have dry days most weeks: you count to check, then go almost straight to getting ready for the dry month.

Not sure? Count your week first (it's the same for every level) and decide from the numbers.

Before you start

Most people who drink excessively can cut down without medical treatment. But for some people, stopping or cutting down suddenly is dangerous.

See a GP or doctor before you start if:

- you drink heavily every day
- you've had withdrawal symptoms before: anxiety, trouble sleeping, feeling or being sick, a racing heart, sweating or shaking
- you've tried to cut down and couldn't

The NHS says it can be very dangerous to stop drinking suddenly if you're dependent on alcohol. Withdrawal symptoms begin within 6 to 12 hours of the last drink and usually last 3 to 7 days. If you get them, get medical help before you try to stop.

Call 999 or go to A&E (or your local emergency number) if, after cutting down, someone is shaking visibly, unusually restless or upset, confused, seeing or hearing things that aren't there, or having a seizure. Don't drive yourself: ask someone to drive you or call an ambulance.

Some people shouldn't drink at all. Talk to a doctor or pharmacist rather than follow a cutting-down plan if you're pregnant or might be pregnant, are recovering from alcohol use disorder, can't control the amount you drink, take medicines that can interact with alcohol, or have certain medical conditions, such as some liver diseases.

Tools

- Somewhere to count: a notebook, your phone's notes, or a drinks-tracking app. Write each drink down when you have it, not the next morning. Add up the week in units or standard drinks rather than glasses, so a switch to smaller sizes shows in the total.

- Alcohol-free drinks you actually like, at home and in mind for the pub or a party.
- Smaller glasses and sizes: a bottle of beer instead of a pint, a small glass of wine instead of a large one.
- A ready "no, thanks", said the same way every time.
- A calendar with your dry days and the dry month's start date in it.

Common mistakes

- Counting a good week. Your first count should be an ordinary one. Otherwise half of it means little.
- Starting the dry month too soon. Wait until two dry days a week are routine. The month is much easier on top of that habit.
- Saving up. Two dry days don't mean extra drinks on the others. Set the limit before the first drink.
- Giving up after a slip. Slip-ups are expected. Think about what led to it, plan for that, and repeat the week.
- No plan for after the dry month. Without one, it's easy to slide straight back to where you started. Write it down in the last week of the month.
- Stopping suddenly when you drink heavily every day. See "Before you start".

The dry month and keeping it up

Pick a month with as few big occasions as you can, and tell people the date. Ask if someone will do it with you.

During the month, notice how you sleep and how much energy you have, and write it down. When the month gets hard, read it back.

If you drink during the dry month, don't start again from day one. Think about what led to it, and carry on to the end of the month.

After the month, the habit is the two dry days, the limit before the first drink, and the count. Keep all three. Once a month, add up a week and compare it with your first. If it's creeping back above half, go back to the "Same again" weeks for a fortnight.

If you find you can't keep to your limits however you plan, talk to a doctor. That isn't failing the plan; it's the next right step.

If you fall behind

Missed 1 week: Slip-ups are expected. Write down what led to it, then repeat the same week rather than moving on. Don't make up for it with extra dry days.

Missed 2 weeks: Go back to the last week you finished in full and do it again before you carry on. If you were in the dry month, finish it rather than restarting it, then do the first "After the month" week twice.

Missed 3 weeks: Count one ordinary week again, honestly, without changing anything. If you're back to drinking most days, restart at "Smaller drinks and a limit" in "I drink most days"; otherwise restart at two drink-free days. Keep your first count as the number to halve, unless the new one is higher.

Missed 4 or more weeks: Count a week again and pick the level that fits that count. If you keep finding you can't stick to limits, talk to a GP or doctor: getting help is part of drinking less, not a sign you failed.

Sources

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-advice/tips-on-cutting-down-alcohol/`
“Have several drink-free days each week.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-advice/tips-on-cutting-down-alcohol/
“Before you start drinking, set a limit on how much you're going to drink.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-advice/tips-on-cutting-down-alcohol/
“Try bottled beer instead of pints, or a small glass of wine instead of a large one.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/alcohol-misuse/
“It can be very dangerous to stop drinking suddenly if you're dependent on alcohol.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/alcohol-misuse/
“Withdrawal symptoms begin within 6 to 12 hours of your last drink, and usually last from 3 to 7 days.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/alcohol-misuse/
“If you get withdrawal symptoms, get medical help before you try to stop drinking.”

NHS
https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/alcohol-misuse/
“Do not drive to A&E. Ask someone to drive you or call 999 and ask for an ambulance.”

Kaiser Permanente
https://healthy.kaiserpermanente.org/health-wellness/health-encyclopedia/he.zx3994
“Expect slip-ups. When you have one, think about what led to it. You can use this information to avoid a similar result next time.”

Kaiser Permanente
https://healthy.kaiserpermanente.org/health-wellness/health-encyclopedia/he.zx3994
“If you have moderate to severe alcohol use disorder, you may need medical care to stop or cut back safely.”

CDC
https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/about-alcohol-use/lower-alcohol-related-harms.html
“Drinking less is better for your health than drinking more.”

CDC
https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/about-alcohol-use/lower-alcohol-related-harms.html
“Most people who drink excessively can choose to drink less without needing medical treatment.”

NIAAA (US National Institutes of Health)
https://niaaa.nih.gov/about-niaaa/directors-page/niaaa-directors-blog/kicking-new-year-dry-january-here-are-six-tips-success
“Dry January is a time when people take a break from drinking and examine their relationship with alcohol.”

NIAAA (US National Institutes of Health)
https://niaaa.nih.gov/about-niaaa/directors-page/niaaa-directors-blog/kicking-new-year-dry-january-here-are-six-tips-success
“Have a polite, assertive "no, thanks" ready for when you are offered a drink.”

NIAAA (US National Institutes of Health)
https://niaaa.nih.gov/about-niaaa/directors-page/niaaa-directors-blog/kicking-new-year-dry-january-here-are-six-tips-success
“Let friends and family know about your plan to participate in Dry January. Consider asking them to join you and support each other throughout the month.”

NIAAA (US National Institutes of Health)
https://niaaa.nih.gov/about-niaaa/directors-page/niaaa-directors-blog/kicking-new-year-dry-january-here-are-six-tips-success
“Have a plan in place for when the month ends.”

NIAAA (US National Institutes of Health)
https://niaaa.nih.gov/about-niaaa/directors-page/niaaa-directors-blog/kicking-new-year-dry-january-here-are-six-tips-success
“As the month progresses, pay attention to how you feel.”

NIAAA (US National Institutes of Health)
https://niaaa.nih.gov/about-niaaa/directors-page/niaaa-directors-blog/kicking-new-year-dry-january-here-are-six-tips-success
“Make sure alternative alcohol-free beverages are available at parties and gatherings.”

CDC
https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/about-alcohol-use/lower-alcohol-related-harms.html
“Certain people should not drink at all, even in moderation.”

CDC
https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/about-alcohol-use/moderate-alcohol-use.html
“Are pregnant or might be pregnant.”

CDC
https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/about-alcohol-use/moderate-alcohol-use.html
“Have certain medical conditions—like some liver diseases.”

CDC
https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/about-alcohol-use/moderate-alcohol-use.html
“Are taking medications that can interact with alcohol.”

CDC
https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/about-alcohol-use/moderate-alcohol-use.html
“Can't control the amount you drink.”

CDC
https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/about-alcohol-use/moderate-alcohol-use.html
“Are recovering from alcohol use disorder.”

This plan online	https://goaltodo.com/drink-less-alcohol
Reach it with others on Welang	https://welang.com/goals/drink-less-alcohol
Reach it on your own in HourLife	https://www.hourlife.com

This plan is a guide, not medical advice. See a doctor before starting if you have a health condition, are pregnant, or haven't exercised in a long time.