This article provides some useful strategies and useful services to either help reduce alcohol intake or to stop alcohol intake altogether. Research shows regularly drinking more than 14 units of alcohol a week risks damaging your health. The recommended weekly limit of 14 units is equivalent to 6 pints of average-strength beer or 10 small glasses of low-strength wine. The effects of alcohol on your health will depend on how much you drink. The less you drink, the lower the health risks.

**Realising you have a problem with alcohol is the first big step to getting help.**

You may need help if:

* you often feel the need to have a drink
* you get into trouble because of your drinking
* other people warn you about how much you're drinking
* you think your drinking is causing you problems

A good place to start is with a GP. Try to be accurate and honest about how much you drink and any problems it may be causing you. If you have become dependent on alcohol, you will have found it difficult to fully control your drinking in some way. So, you will probably need some help either to cut down and control your drinking or stop completely, and also some plans to help maintain any changes.

**To reduce your health risk from drinking try to:**

* limit how much you drink on any single occasion
* drink more slowly
* drink with food
* alternate with water or non-alcoholic drinks
* plan ahead to avoid problems, such as making sure you can get home safely or having people you trust with you
* men and women are advised not to drink more than 14 units a week on a regular basis
* spread your drinking over 3 or more days if you regularly drink as much as 14 units a week
* if you want to cut down, try to have several drink-free days each week

The GP may suggest different types of assessment and support options available to you, such as from local community alcohol services. You can also ask about any free local support groups and other alcohol counselling that may suit you. Cutting down or stopping drinking is usually just the beginning, and most people will need some degree of help or a long-term plan to stay in control or completely alcohol free. Getting the right support can be crucial to maintaining control in the future.

Self-help or mutual aid groups (groups such as AA or SMART Recovery groups) are accessible in most areas.

Useful contacts for alcohol problems

* Drinkline is the national alcohol helpline. If you're worried about your own or someone else's drinking, you can call this free helpline in complete confidence. Call 0300 123 1110 (weekdays 9am to 8pm, weekends 11am to 4pm).
* [Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/) is a free self-help group. Its "12 step" programme involves getting sober with the help of regular support groups.
* [Al-Anon Family Groups](http://www.al-anonuk.org.uk/) offers support and understanding to the families and friends of problem drinkers, whether they're still drinking or not. Alateen is part of Al-Anon and can be attended by 12- to 17-year-olds who are affected by another person's drinking, usually a parent.
* [We Are With You](https://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/) is a UK-wide treatment agency that helps individuals, families and communities manage the effects of drug and alcohol misuse.
* [Adfam](http://www.adfam.org.uk/) is a national charity working with families affected by drugs and alcohol. Adfam operates an online message board and a database of local support groups.
* The [National Association for Children of Alcoholics (Nacoa)](http://www.nacoa.org.uk/) provides a free, confidential telephone and email helpline for children of alcohol-dependent parents and others concerned about their welfare. Call 0800 358 3456 for the Nacoa helpline.
* [SMART Recovery](https://www.smartrecovery.org.uk/) groups help people decide whether they have a problem, build up their motivation to change, and offer a set of proven tools and techniques to support recovery.
* Addiction NI is a charity based in Belfast but can also offers services in some other areas of NI. Call 02890664434 for further information.

**Psychological Therapies Department, PRRT is a Specialist Clinical Service tailored specifically to meet the needs of Policer Officers and their Families. To make an enquiry or arrange an appointment contact Services Admin on 028 9042 7788 or email servicesadmin@prrt.org**

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