

Managing your drinking now you're a parent

Raising children can be stressful, and the pandemic has piled additional pressures on parents. If you've been feeling like drinking to cope, you're not alone.

Here we'd like to offer a few tips on how you can manage your drinking and help your child have the best possible chance of a healthy relationship with alcohol when they are older, by setting them an example you would want them to follow.

How much is too much?

The UK Chief Medical Officers (the top doctors) advise that both men and women should not drink more than 14 units of alcohol a week. That means no more than five or six pints of beer or cider in any one week, or about a bottle and a half of wine. They also advise spreading your drinking over three or more days and making sure you have some alcohol-free days each week.

These guidelines are exactly that – guidelines. Drinking more than 14 units some weeks doesn't mean you're heading for inevitable disaster; keeping under the 14 unit threshold doesn't guarantee you everlasting good health. But if you want to keep your risk of alcohol-related health problems to a minimum, 14 units is a sensible maximum.

If you want to check how healthy your drinking is, take the **Check your drinking** quiz on our website.

Tips for cutting back

There are a few things you can do to help you cut back on your drinking:

- Try keeping a drinks diary, jotting down how much you're drinking, when, where, and maybe why. This will help you get a realistic picture of your drinking habits. Download the free **Try Dry** to help you keep track of your drinking.

- Drinking can easily become a habit if you don't take regular breaks from it.
- Think about how much alcohol you keep in the house – if you've got it in the cupboard or the fridge, it's all too easy to drink it.
- Investigate low-alcohol and alcohol-free options. Most supermarkets and quite a few pubs now offer good low-alcohol and alcohol-free options, and the quality of alcohol-free beers, ciders, wines (and even spirits!) has improved massively in the last few years. We've reviewed **hundreds of drinks on our website** – some alcohol-free and most 0.5% ABV or less – to help you choose.
- If you go out, don't let other people pressure you into drinking more, and maybe avoid drinking in rounds; and, again, keep a look-out for low-alcohol options in pubs and restaurants.

Getting some help

If you're worried that you may be drinking too much, the first thing to remember is not to blame yourself, or anyone else. There are all sorts of reasons that any of us might get into a habit of drinking too much or too often, and recognising that things might have got out of hand is the first step to getting back on track.

You can use the **Check your drinking** quiz on our website to get an understanding of your drinking and whether you need to reduce it. It will also help you decide whether you could benefit from speaking with your GP or your local alcohol service. There is still, unfortunately, quite a bit of stigma around visiting an alcohol support service; but the truth is that all sorts of people, from all sorts of backgrounds, use these services every year to turn their lives around. Alcohol services understand the need to be discreet, confidential, and non-judgemental. You can find out about the range of support options available from the Alcohol Change UK website.