**Please send only to local media outlets.**

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Embargoed until 00:01 16 December 2020**

**One in five people who drink alcohol plan to take on Dry January in 2021**

**[Insert your area/organisation] encourages people to download Alcohol Change UK’s free app, Try Dry, and take on Dry January with support to double their chance of an alcohol-free month.**

One in five (20%) people who drink alcohol are planning to take on [**Dry January**](https://alcoholchange.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/dry-january) this year, or 1 in 8 (12.4%) of all UK adults. New research from [**Alcohol Change UK**](https://alcoholchange.org.uk/), the charity behind Dry January, suggests that more people than ever are planning a Dry January to reset their relationship with alcohol after a year when many have found themselves drinking more heavily.

Research has consistently shown that **many people are drinking more heavily since the COVID-19 pandemic** and associated restrictions began earlier this year. This new research finds that close to one in three (29%) people who drink alcohol say that they have drunk more in 2020 than in 2019. One in five (22%) have felt concerned about the amount they have been drinking since COVID-19 restrictions began in March this year and drinking ‘to try and cope’ (23%).

**A quarter** (27%) **of people who drink alcohol would like to cut down in 2021.** Evidence shows that Dry January is an effective and lasting way to cut down; research by the University of Sussex published in 20201 found that 70% of those taking on a Dry January are still drinking less six months later - but interestingly this only applied to those who did the campaign with support from Alcohol Change UK, via their free Try Dry app or coaching emails.

[Insert your organisation] is encouraging people in [insert your area] to sign up for Dry January via the **free app,** [**Try Dry**](https://alcoholchange.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/dry-january/get-involved/the-dry-january-app)**,** to get benefits like more energy, saving money and losing weight, and to help them drink more healthily year-round. People who sign-up are twice as likely to manage the whole month without drinking compared to those who try to do it alone.

**Dr Richard Piper**, Chief Executive of Alcohol Change UK, said:

“2020 has been a year like no other. Many of us have spent the year stressed, scared and tired – it’s no wonder that many of us don’t feel much like ourselves. When things get tough, we can find ourselves slipping into drinking habits we wish we could break – but Dry January can help. It’s our chance for a reset. 31 days to try something new, and to see some amazing benefits like brighter skin, a fuller wallet, a calmer mind and a better night’s sleep – and to help you drink more healthily all year round.

“It’s all too easy to bury our heads in the sand when it comes to our drinking. Our new research shows that one in three (30%) of those drinking at increasing- or high-risk levels believe they don’t need to do Dry January because they drink ‘healthily’ – even though the number of units they drink is putting their health at risk. That means millions of people are putting their health at risk, but either don’t realise or don’t want to believe it. The new year is a great opportunity for us all to reassess our drinking.

“Dry January isn’t about giving something up. It’s about getting something back. Get your fun back. Get your calm back. Get your energy back. Get your *you* back.”

He added,

“There’s great news for people who want to support their local pubs and other hospitality venues after a tough year: more and more pubs and bars are improving their alcohol-free offering, so where restrictions allow you could head down and see what’s available at your local.”

[Insert quote from your spokesperson]

[Insert information about any events planned in your area to support participants or encourage signups]

**Public Health England** has endorsed Dry January.

**ENDS**

[Insert details of your media lead]

For interview requests and briefings from Alcohol Change UK, the charity behind Dry January, please contact: Maddy Lawson, Head of Communications, Alcohol Change UK

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**Notes to editors**

**Alcohol withdrawal warning**

Stopping drinking *suddenly* can be very dangerous, and can even kill you, if you are dependent on alcohol. If, after a period of drinking, you experience any of the following symptoms, you may be dependent on alcohol and you should NOT suddenly stop drinking completely:

* seizures (fits)
* hand tremors (‘the shakes’)
* sweating
* seeing things that are not real (visual hallucinations)
* depression
* anxiety
* difficulty sleeping (insomnia).

But you can still take control of your drinking. Speak to a GP who will be able to get help for you to reduce your drinking safely.

**References and notes from release**

1 de Visser, R. and Nicholls, J. (2020) Temporary abstinence during Dry January: predictors of success; impact on well-being and self-efficacy, Psychology & Health, 35:11, 1293-1305

**The charity behind Dry January**

Alcohol Change UK works for a world free from alcohol harm. We fund, commission and share research; provide information and advice; work to ensure more and better support and treatment; encourage better policy and regulation; shift drinking cultures through our campaigns; and work to change drinking behaviours. [**Find out more.**](https://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk/about-us)

**How to do Dry January**

Download the **free app** [**Try Dry: the Dry January app**](https://alcoholchange.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/dry-january/the-dry-january-app)via the App Store or Google Play. Via the app you will be able to receive optional daily coaching emails. You can sign up for just the emails at dryjanuary.org.uk.

The app allows people to track their units, calories and money saved not drinking, plus set personalised goals and earn badges year-round.

People who sign up for Dry January, whether online or via the free app, are twice as likely to spend the whole the month alcohol-free, despite being heavier drinkers to start with (de Visser and Nicholls 2020).

**About the survey**

The survey was carried out online by Opinium between 24 and 26 November 2020. Total sample size was 2,000 UK adults, of whom 1,230 said they were drinkers. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

**Year-round healthier drinking**

People who take on Dry January drink more riskily than the general population (as measured by AUDIT-C, a tool developed by the World Health Organisation). Yet six months after the challenge ends their average drinking risk score has decreased dramatically – in contrast to people who do not take on Dry January, whose risk scores remain similar.

* Drinking days per week dropped on average from 4.3 to 3.3;
* Units consumed per drinking day dropped on average from 8.6 to 7.1;
* Frequency of drunkenness fell on average from 3.4 per month to 2.1 per month.

Reference: de Visser, R. and Nicholls, J. (2020) Temporary abstinence during Dry January: predictors of success; impact on well-being and self-efficacy, Psychology & Health, 35:11, 1293-1305

**Physical health**

Research published in 2018, conducted by the Royal Free Hospital and published in the British Medical journal, found that a month off alcohol:

* Lowers blood pressure
* Lowers cholesterol
* Reduces diabetes risk
* Reduces levels of cancer-related proteins in the blood

**Reference:** Mehta G, Macdonald S, Cronberg A, et al Short-term abstinence from alcohol and changes in cardiovascular risk factors, liver function tests and cancer-related growth factors: a prospective observational study BMJ Open 2018;8:e020673. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2017-020673