

daily **diary**

Your guide and
record to success

Why cut down and change?

Drinking too much alcohol can affect your health, your job, your family, your relationships and your community. Making small changes to your drinking can make a big difference to your health, and also allows time for new, healthier habits to become routine.

When you start to cut down your drinking you might notice that:

- you sleep better and have more energy during the day
- you look better – your eyes and skin seem brighter, you may also start to lose weight
- you can concentrate better
- your mood is better and you feel less anxious, stressed, down or depressed
- you feel better physically, with fewer headaches or upset stomachs
- you save money.

When cutting down your drinking it is good to have the support of someone close to you, or the help of a health professional. Their help and understanding can help you reach your goals.

Following this diary will help you focus on what you are trying to achieve.



Plan ahead and think of days you can avoid alcohol.

Every time you have an alcoholic drink you should write it down as soon as possible. Be honest – taking control of your drinking means trusting yourself and believing you can make a change.

This diary runs over seven weeks, so you will be able to see if your drinking follows any patterns, and think of ways to break these habits. You can also note what your mood was like before you started drinking and what the consequences of your drinking were, good or bad.

Weekly drinking guidelines

For both men and women, the UK Chief Medical Officers advise:

- To keep health risks from alcohol to a low level it is safest not to drink more than **14 units a week** on a regular basis.
- If you regularly drink as much as 14 units per week, it is best to spread this evenly over **three or more days**. If you have one or two heavy drinking episodes a week, you increase your risks of death from long-term illnesses and from accidents and injuries.
- The risk of developing a range of health problems (including cancers of the mouth, throat and breast) increases the more you drink on a regular basis.
- If you wish to cut down the amount you drink, a good way to help achieve this is to have several drink-free days each week.

Alcohol and pregnancy

- If you are pregnant or think you could become pregnant, the safest approach is not to drink alcohol at all, to keep risks to your baby to a minimum.
- Drinking in pregnancy can lead to long-term harm to the baby, with the more you drink the greater the risk.

Lots of pregnancies are not planned, so you might not have known you were pregnant for a while.

If you have been drinking small amounts of alcohol before you knew you were pregnant, the risk is likely to be low. The first and most important thing to do is stop. If you are worried about alcohol use during pregnancy, talk to your doctor or midwife.

At a glance



**175 ml
glass
of wine**
(12.5%
ABV)



**250 ml
glass
of wine**
(12.5%
ABV)



**330 ml
bottle of
beer/
lager/cider**
(4.5% ABV)



**1 pint of
beer/
lager/cider**
(4% ABV)



**25 ml
measure
of spirits**
(40% ABV)



**750 ml
bottle
of wine**
(13%
ABV)

Drinks diary **week 1**

Date	Time	Place	Who with
------	------	-------	----------

<i>Fri 4th</i>	<i>1-2pm</i>	<i>Thai Dragon</i>	<i>Workmates</i>
----------------	--------------	--------------------	------------------

These extracts are taken from real-life stories provided by the Glasgow Alcohol and Drug Partnership. They are here to inspire you and to show you that, even in very difficult situations, it is possible to overcome problems related to alcohol.

real-life stories

1

My revolution

I started drinking when I was 13. I remember getting caught out, one Saturday, in the local pub. The person sitting next to me leaned over and said, 'Did I not just see you arguing with the bus driver for a child fare?' I was a weekend drinker for a long time and my dependency grew at a menacingly slow rate. I didn't realise when I had crossed all the invisible lines: drinking regularly throughout the week, having blackouts.

I've got new friends now that I met through music, at a gig. Music is one of my positive new coping mechanisms. It makes me feel good. It relaxes me and I forget all my worries. Sometimes I dance around the living room. It's the best workout; my heart is bursting with joy and I'm not high on spirits, but my spirits are most definitely high!

Loved back to life

I agree that I probably drank too much as there were some nights I just couldn't remember; I would end up being violent and aggressive. I would wake up not knowing how I had got home or what I had done. Deep down I believe I was really sick of living this life but a way out of it didn't really seem possible.

I suffered terrible mood swings before and after drinking. I didn't get into trouble every time I was drunk but every time I got into trouble I was drunk.

My partner left me two days after I started in AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) but I didn't drink. It hurt so badly but I didn't lift a drink because I knew from that first meeting that I had used alcohol to cope with many things in my life. I haven't touched any mind-altering substances since being in AA and I was so happy and proud of myself to celebrate my first year sober.

I have a relationship with someone new today. I have an amazing relationship with my family and I can look at myself in the mirror again. Even when times get tough my worst day sober is much better than my best day drunk.

Doing it for me

I didn't want to admit I had a problem. For five years that was my life – drinking, getting detoxed, getting into jail. I just woke up one morning and said to myself, 'I don't want this life any more.'

I still have panic attacks, even though I don't drink, but now I know what's happening to me. I don't let it frighten me now. I sit down, do my breathing exercises, and stay calm. I went through counselling and they taught me how to cope with my panic attacks. What has also really helped is going to my women's group. I've done lots of things with them: keep-fit, computing, storytelling, reading groups. Now I help with the new women coming in and that makes me feel good, being able to help someone who's just starting to recover from alcohol, because I've been there myself.

I'm doing it for me, because I don't want to have that horrible feeling again, when my hand was shaking so badly I couldn't hold a pen. That was like being in a living nightmare. I was killing myself with the drink. My liver was damaged, inflamed. Now, I don't need to worry about my liver.

My confidence has grown. I can deal with life and try new things and I'm able to watch my grandweans growing up. I want to live my life and see them enjoying theirs.

Organisations that can help you

Your GP or nurse can refer you to local alcohol support services. Below is a list of other services that are also available:

NHS inform provides information about alcohol, alcohol misuse and what support is available.

www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/alcohol

Freephone **0800 22 44 88**

www.nhsinform.scot

Alcoholics Anonymous

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

National Helpline: **0800 9177 650**

Provides advice and a network of informal support sessions for dependent drinkers.

Al-Anon Family Groups

www.al-anonuk.org.uk

Helpline: **0800 0086 811**

Support and understanding for families and friends of people who are dependent on alcohol. Alateen supports 12- to 17-year-olds who are affected by another person's drinking, usually a parent.

Alcohol Focus Scotland

www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk

0141 572 6700

Provides information on alcohol issues.

Drinkline

Telephone: **0800 731 4314** free, weekdays 9 am–9 pm, weekends 10 am–4 pm)

Supports people who are worried about their own or someone else's drinking.

Web chat also available at
www.wearewithyou.org.uk

Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol & Drugs

www.sfad.org.uk

Telephone: **08080 10 10 11** (free) Mon–Fri, 9 am–11 pm; Sat–Sun, callback service.

Supports families who are affected by alcohol or drugs misuse.

Scottish Recovery Consortium

<https://scottishrecoveryconsortium.org/>

Recovery-orientated organisation that supports, represents and advocates recovery from problematic substance abuse.

We are with you (formerly Addaction)

www.wearewithyou.org.uk

Helpline: 0800 915 4624 (weekdays 9 am–9 pm, weekends 10 am–4 pm).

Get free, confidential support with alcohol or drugs from a local service, online or via web chat.

Other formats of this publication are available on request at:



0131 314 5300



nhs.phs-otherformats@nhs.net

Published by Public Health Scotland
1 South Gyle Crescent
Edinburgh EH12 9EB
© Public Health Scotland 2020
All rights reserved.

Established on 1 April 2020,
Public Health Scotland is Scotland's
national public agency for
improving and protecting the health
and wellbeing of Scotland's people.



www.publichealthscotland.scot