

Safer Use Strategies: Tips for Staying Safer When Drinking Alcohol



Any level of alcohol can increase the risk of health problems. But you can take steps to keep yourself safer when you drink. You matter, and your safety matters.

Stay safer while you drink

Drink Water

Drinking water between alcoholic drinks can help you drink less overall and keep your body hydrated. Being hydrated also makes hangovers not as bad.

Eat food

Food slows how fast alcohol gets into your blood, so it causes less harm. Food also gives your body nutrients. Try to eat before you drink and while you drink. Foods with protein (meat, cheese, eggs) and carbs (bread, rice) are good choices when drinking.

Count your drinks

Knowing how much you drink helps you decide how much alcohol you want and helps you stay in control of how alcohol affects you. Keep bottle caps or can tabs in your pocket to keep track of your drink total. Over time, this can help you see what amount works best for you.

Take vitamins

Alcohol takes vitamins away from your body. Most daily vitamins can help make up for this. Just make sure they include b-vitamins: folate, thiamine, and B-12.

Space out your drinks

Feel good for longer and avoid the bad effects by taking these steps: go slow, take small sips, switch between alcoholic drinks and water, soda, non-alcoholic beers, or mocktails.

Avoid mixing drugs

Using alcohol and drugs together can harm your heart and liver and can cause an overdose, especially when mixing alcohol with benzodiazepines (benzos) and opioids. When you drink, try not to use other drugs.

Beer vs malt liquor

You may be drinking more alcohol than you realize. A 24-oz can of malt liquor can equal between 4-6 regular 12-oz beers.

Only drink beverage alcohol

Things like mouthwash, aftershave, cooking wine, vanilla extract, cleaning spray, and sterno have unsafe amounts of alcohol and other harmful chemicals. Stick to alcohol made for people to drink like beer, wine, or liquor.

Drink in a safe place

When you are tipsy or drunk, people can take advantage of you. Drinking on the street or in unsafe places can lead to trouble, injury, or even arrest. If you can, don't drink a lot around people you don't trust. Try to drink in places where you feel safer and more in control.

Flip over for more tips



Healthy Drinking Tips Continued

Change how much you drink

Less is more	Many people like alcohol most when they feel a light buzz, not when they are drunk. Set a limit and drink slowly to keep the buzz with fewer drinks. Try asking a friend to help you stick to your limit. Every drink you skip is a step towards healthier living.
Take a break	Not drinking, even for a short time, gives your liver, kidneys, and pancreas a break and may help prevent health problems. Try not drinking for a few hours or pick one or more days each week to not drink. If you want to stop fully, medical withdrawal management (detox) will help.
Excuse yourself	Choosing not to drink when you are with friends can be uncomfortable. Thinking ahead about how you will turn down a drink can help you feel more confident and in control. You do not have to share your reasons but, planning what to say ahead of time can help. Some reasons you might use are: you have something important to do early the next morning, you are the designated driver, or you are the non-drinker in your group. You can also suggest doing some other activity like getting pizza instead or simply change the subject.
Avoid withdrawal	Alcohol withdrawal, like shaking, seizures, or Delirium Tremens (DTs), can be dangerous. If you want to stop drinking and get shaky when you don't drink, medical withdrawal management (detox) is the safest option. Talk with your doctor about medicines that help prevent these symptoms including seizures.
No safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy	Drinking during pregnancy can impact your baby and may cause lifelong health challenges. Taking small steps to lower or stop alcohol use can help you and your baby. Effective and compassionate treatment options are available. Connect with a primary care provider or prenatal care team.. The MA Substance Use Helpline can help you find specialized programs, like Office-Based Addiction Treatment (OBAT) programs, Bridge Clinics, and Moms Do Care, that can support pregnant, postpartum and parenting people with substance use.
Breastfeeding and drinking alcohol	Drinking beer does NOT increase milk. If you drink while breastfeeding, there is no evidence that one drink a day harms your baby. But it is best to breastfeed or pump right before drinking, then wait about 2 hours for each drink before breastfeeding or using pumped milk again. If you need to pump before that time, throw the milk away. There should always be a sober adult available to care for the baby, even if the baby is asleep.

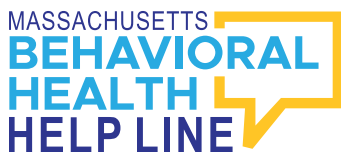
Free and Confidential MA Helplines

The Massachusetts Substance Use Helpline



Provides the public with information about harm reduction, treatment, and recovery services for Substance Use Disorder in Massachusetts, and provides a warm hand-off to these programs when needed. It's free and available 24/7, 365 days a year via phone call, text, or chat. Call 800-327-5050 or visit their [website \(helplinema.org\)](https://www.helplinema.org) to connect.

The Massachusetts Behavioral Health Help Line



Provides the public the full range of treatment services for mental health and substance use offered in Massachusetts, including outpatient, urgent, and immediate crisis care. They provide real-time support, initial clinical evaluation, and connection to further care and/or treatment. Free and available 24/7, 365 days a year via call, text or chat. Call 833-773-2445 or visiting their [website \(masshelpline.com\)](https://www.masshelpline.com).

988: Suicide & Crisis Lifeline



Provides confidential emotional support to all callers in emotional distress and connects them to services if needed. Free and available 24/7, 365 days a year via phone call, text, or chat. Call 988 or visit their [website \(988lifeline.org\)](https://www.988lifeline.org) to connect.