



Safer-use Strategies: Alcohol

Here are some tips to help you stay safer and healthier no matter how you choose to change your use. Using more safely does not mean that you remove all risks, including death, but it can help you reduce your drug-related harm. You are worth it!

Category	Strategy	Why? / How?
Ways to stay healthier when you drink	Drink water	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why? Reduces hangover effects• How? Drink water while you are drinking or alternate between water and alcohol
	Count your drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why? Knowing how much you drink helps you think about how much alcohol you really want or need. It can help you take control of the effects of alcohol.• How? Keep your bottlecaps and screwtops in your pocket and count them later. You can keep track of this over time to see what amount works best for you.
	Try to eat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why? Food eases the pace of alcohol entering the bloodstream so it does less harm. Food gives you important nutrients.• How? Try to eat before you start drinking and while you drink. Proteins (meat, cheese, eggs) and carbs (bread, rice) are especially good choices when you drink.
	Take vitamins	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why? Drinking can take away important nutrients from your body.• How? If you can, try to take B-vitamins: folate, thiamine, B-12. Your case manager might be able help with this.
Ways to make your drinking safer	Avoid nonbeverage alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why? Mouthwash, aftershave, cooking wine, vanilla extract, cleaning spray, sterno contain unpredictable amounts of alcohol and other poisonous ingredients.• How: If you drink, be sure to drink alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, liquor).
	Drink beer vs malt liquor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why? You might be getting more alcohol than you thought. A 24 oz. 211 Steel Reserve = nearly 4 12oz regular beers. A 24oz. Joose or Tilt =nearly 6 12oz beers.• How? Check the labels and try beer with 4-6% alcohol instead, like Bud or Keystone
	Space your drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why? Keep the buzz going for longer and avoid the not-so-good things.• How? Pace yourself; sip your beer; alternate between beer and water.
	Avoid mixing drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why? Drinking and drugging at the same time can stress your heart and liver and can lead to overdose.• How? When you drink, try to avoid other drugs.
Ways to change how much you drink	Drink in a safe place	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why? People can take advantage of you when you're drinking. Drinking on the streets or in unsafe places can lead to fights, hassels and arrest.• How? If you can, avoid drinking heavily with people you don't trust. Try to drink in places where you feel more in control of your surroundings.
	Less is more	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why? Most things people like about alcohol occur when they are buzzed not drunk.• How? Think of some way you can limit your drinking, then pace your drinking to keep the buzz going on less drinks. You might ask your case manager or a friend to help you stick with your limit.
	Chose not to use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why? Not drinking--even for a few hours--gives your liver, kidneys and pancreas a rest and may help you avoid other problems.• How? Try a few hours of not drinking or introducing one nondrinking day a week. To stop altogether, medically supervised detox might help.
	Avoid withdrawal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why? Alcohol withdrawal--getting the shakes, seizures or DTs--can be serious• How? If you want to stop drinking altogether and you get more than a little shaky if you don't drink, medical detox is safest. If you choose to drink, alcohol can relieve withdrawal symptoms. Check with your doctor about anti-seizure meds.