

## Ready to quit drinking?

If so, start by filling out your plan below (or at this [website](#) where you can print it out or email it to yourself.)

**GOAL:** I want to cut stop drinking on this date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reasons:** My biggest reasons to quit drinking are:

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**Strategies:** I will use these strategies to help quit drinking (the next page can help):

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**People:** The people who can help me are (names and how they can help):

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**Signs of success:** I will know my plan is working if:

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**Possible roadblocks:** Some things that might make it hard **and how I'll handle them:**

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## Strategies to quit

**Find different things to do.** If drinking takes up a lot of your time, you can fill free time by thinking of new, healthy things to do. Hobbies you enjoy, making new friends, or spending more time with friends you've missed. If you are used to drinking to feel more relaxed with others, or cope with feeling sad or angry, or deal with problems, you can seek other, healthy ways to deal with those areas of your life.

**Avoid “triggers.”** What triggers your urge to drink? If some people or places make you drink even when you don't want to, try to avoid them. If certain things you do, certain times during the day, or certain feelings trigger the urge to drink, plan something else to do instead of drinking. If drinking at home is a problem, don't keep any there.

**Know your “no.”** You're likely to be offered a drink at times when you don't want one. Have a polite, firm “no, thanks” ready. The faster you can say no, the less likely you are to give in. If you pause, it allows you time to think of reasons to go along and drink.



**Plan to handle urges.** When you cannot avoid a trigger and you feel an urge to drink, think of these choices: Remind yourself of your reasons for changing (it can help to carry them on paper or email them to yourself). Or talk things through with someone you trust. Or get involved with a healthy, different thing to do, such as exercise or a hobby. Or, instead of fighting the urge to drink, wait for it to go away without giving in, knowing that it will soon pass.

These four strategies are helpful. But if you think you may be addicted to alcohol and want to stop drinking, don't do it alone. It can be dangerous to suddenly stop drinking when you are addicted to alcohol or are a heavy drinker. Find medical help to make a safe plan.

## Help for quitting

It is often hard to quit without some help. There are lots of ways proven to help people quit drinking. One size doesn't fit all, though. It's a good idea to do some homework on the web or at the library to find which way works best for you. You are more likely to stick with your plan to quit if you get the kind of help that works best for you.

## SOCIAL SUPPORT

Many people find it hard to make a new life without drinking. It can help if you:

- talk with family and friends about your plan to quit drinking
- make new hobbies and social groups
- find other ways to spend your time than drinking
- ask for help from friends or family

Things that friends or family could do to help:

- not offer you alcohol
- not use alcohol around you
- give words of support
- not ask you to take on new demands right now
- go to a group like Al-Anon

Think about joining Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or other support groups. People who attend these groups are more likely to quit drinking than those who do not. Shop around to see which group feels right to you. You'll get more out of it if you have a sponsor and reach out to other people in the group for help.

It's common for people with alcohol problems to feel depressed or anxious. They may go away if you stop drinking. See a doctor or health professional if these feelings don't stop or get worse. If you're thinking of killing yourself, call your doctor or go to the nearest emergency room right away. There is help for you during this hard time.



## PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

New ways to treat alcohol problems mean that people now have more choices.

**Medications to treat alcohol problems.** New meds can make it easier to quit drinking. Some (naltrexone, topiramate, and acamprosate) don't make you sick if you drink, like older meds do (disulfiram). None of these meds are addictive, so it's ok to take them while you go to support groups or alcohol counseling. A major study showed that people can quit drinking when they take these meds and keep going to their doctor or health professional.

**Alcohol counseling.** "Talk therapy" also works well. There are lots of counseling methods that work. These are called 12-step, cognitive-behavioral, and motivational enhancement. It's up to you to see which one you like best. Counseling for alcohol problems should help you with how hard it can be to quit drinking - not tell you what to do.



**Specialized, intensive treatment programs.** Some people will need more intensive programs. See below for help finding a program like this. If you need a referral to a program, ask your doctor.

Quitting drinking can take a lot of work, and you may not succeed the first time you try. It's normal to try more than once, but you learn more each time. Each try brings you closer to your goal. Whatever plan you choose, give it a good shot. If one plan doesn't work, try something else. And if a setback happens, get back on track as soon as you can.

In the long run, your chances for success are good. Studies show that most people with alcohol problems can cut back or quit.

## Resources

### ***Professional help***

- National Alcohol and Drug help line: 1-800-662-4357
- American Psychological Association: 1-800-964-2000
- American Society of Addiction Medicine: 301-656-3920

### ***Support groups***

- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA): [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) 212-870-3400
- Secular Organizations for Sobriety: [www.secularsobriety.org](http://www.secularsobriety.org) 323-666-4295
- SMART Recovery: [www.smartrecovery.org](http://www.smartrecovery.org) 440-951-5357
- Women for Sobriety: [www.womenforsobriety.org](http://www.womenforsobriety.org) 215-536-8026

### ***Groups for family and friends***

- Al-Anon/Alateen: [www.alanon.alateen.org](http://www.alanon.alateen.org) 1-888-425-2666
- Adult Children of Alcoholics: [www.adultchildren.org](http://www.adultchildren.org) 310-534-1815

### ***Helpful information***

- Rethinking Drinking: <http://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/>
- National Clearinghouse of Drug and Alcohol Information: <https://ncadd.org/>

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