# Taking resolutions on alcohol beyond the new year

For many of us, January is a time for some well-earned rest and relaxation. It's a great chance to take a break from work to enjoy travel, spend time with loved ones or just unwind at home. With the warmer weather, we’re often making the most of barbeques, parties, festivals and long days at the beach.

The start of the year can also be a time to reflect and make plans or resolutions for the year ahead. Thinking about alcohol and its role in our lives may be part of this, often leading to decisions to cut back or give it up altogether.

People’s reasons for making changes around alcohol can vary, but the physical and mental health benefits are clear. Reducing or stopping drinking can lower the risk of serious diseases such as cancer, heart disease and stroke. It can improve sleep, mood, and energy levels, and lessen the chances of accident and injury from risky drinking.

If you’re looking to make a change, there are many strategies you can use to stay motivated.

### Set a goal

Maybe you’d like to enjoy an alcohol-free outing, try staying alcohol-free on certain days of the week, or stop drinking alcohol altogether. Whatever your goal, planning can help to avoid triggers to drink and provide strategies to overcome these, for example going outside to get some fresh air.

As part of setting your goals, it can be helpful to think about why you want to reduce or quit alcohol, your triggers and useful strategies to overcome these, and the support networks and services you can call on to help you stick with your plans.

### Let others know you’re making a change

Sharing your plan to reduce or give up alcohol gives your family and friends the chance to help you out. You may even find someone you know has the same goal.

Being open can help you to feel more accountable, which can help boost your motivation to keep going. As well as the people close to you, there are support networks and communities available online such as those offered by [Hello Sunday Morning](https://hellosundaymorning.org/daybreak/) and [Sober in the Country](https://www.soberinthecountry.org/bushtribe).

### Be mindful of social influences

Social rituals and routines with friends and family can have a strong influence on how or whether you drink. It can be helpful to socialise in places where drinking is less of a focus. You might make plans to catch up during the day and at a café instead of a bar. Meeting a friend for a walk or other exercise is another option.

### Prepare simple answers to questions about alcohol

It’s your decision whether you drink alcohol or how much, but it can help to have a few answers ready if you think others may ask about your choice. This could be as straightforward as saying, “No thanks, I’m not drinking” or, “I’m cutting back on alcohol”.

Other options could be to say that you want to have a clear head or a good night’s sleep, or that you have an early start the next day.

### Know your standard drinks and set a limit

It can be helpful to understand the [Australian Alcohol Guidelines](https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/FARE-Fact-Sheet-Alcohol-guidelines.pdf) as you assess the role alcohol currently plays in your life. If you drink alcohol, the Guidelines recommend that you have no more than four standard drinks on any one day and no more than 10 standard drinks a week.

A standard drink may be less than you think. [Alcohol Think Again](https://alcoholthinkagain.com.au/alcohol-your-health/online-tools/standard-drink-tool/) has a useful interactive tool that compares your pour to a standard drink. You can also use apps like [Daybreak](https://hellosundaymorning.org/daybreak/) and [Drinks Meter](https://www.drinksmeter.com/) to keep track of your alcohol intake.

Turning Point offers an [alcohol self-assessment tool](https://www.turningpoint.org.au/treatment/self-assessments/alcohol#/?_k=v1rlxe) if you’d like to better understand your alcohol use.

### Remember what’s in it for you

Keeping the benefits of cutting back or giving up alcohol in mind can give you the incentive to keep going. Remember that reducing your alcohol intake lowers your risk of health problems such as cancer and heart disease, can increase your energy, improve your sleep and mood, and save you money.

If you’ve been drinking heavily for a long time, it can be dangerous to stop drinking on your own without medical advice or extra support. Consult your GP for advice on the best way forward.

For more tips and tools for cutting back, as well as resources and links to support services, visit our [Resources and support](https://fare.org.au/resources/) pages.