

# How to reduce your alcohol intake this holiday season and enjoy a healthier 2023

**22 December 2022**

The festive season can bring challenges for people wanting to reduce or avoid alcohol use, as alcohol companies relentlessly market their products as central to holiday gatherings.

We can all create an environment where we prioritise health and wellbeing this festive season and reduce the risk of alcohol harm to ourselves and those around us.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) CEO Caterina Giorgi shared some strategies for enjoying the holidays and looking forward to a healthier 2023.

“Reducing the amount of alcohol you drink can deliver significant short- and long-term health benefits, including improvements to your mood, energy, sleep, and concentration,” Ms Giorgi said.

“Reducing your alcohol intake can also reduce your risk of chronic illness, such as cancer and other diseases.”

Creating supportive environments for people to avoid alcohol is also really important, especially at holiday events and celebrations.

“We can all play a role in supporting people who are wanting to reduce their alcohol use or avoid alcohol over the holiday period,” Ms Giorgi said.

“Family and friends can ensure that alcohol is not made a central part of celebrations by having a range of non alcoholic drinks available and supporting people in their decision not to drink.”

Some useful tips for prioritising health and wellbeing this holiday season are outlined below.

- **Make a plan before heading out**

Before going to a party or gathering, set a goal. This might be to have an alcohol-free outing or you may want to aim to stay within the Australian Alcohol Guidelines and drink no more than four standard drinks in a day and ten standard drinks a week. It can be helpful to make a plan to avoid triggers to drink and to develop strategies to overcome these, for example going outside to get some fresh air.

- **Create a support network**

Sharing your plan to reduce or give up alcohol gives your family and friends the opportunity to help you out. You may even find someone has the same goal. By being open, you also become more accountable, which may help boost your motivation to keep going. A support network can also be an online community such as those available through Hello Sunday Morning and Sober in the Country. We can also create a positive environment for people who are avoiding alcohol or cutting back on their alcohol use, by supporting their decision to avoid alcohol.

- **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. Sometimes it can help to make plans to catch up during the day and suggest a café instead of a bar. Meeting a friend for a walk or other exercise is a great option. We can all consider these factors when making plans, by ensuring that celebrations and opportunities to connect are not centred around alcohol.

- **Be prepared with answers to questions about alcohol**

It is your decision whether you drink alcohol and how much, but if you are worried about being asked it can help to have a few answers ready. This can be as straightforward as saying, “No thanks, I’m not drinking” or, “I’m cutting back on alcohol”. Other options could be saying that you want to have a clear head or a good night’s sleep, or that you have an early start the next day.

- **Remember the benefits**

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 not only lowers your risk of health problems such as cancer and heart disease, it can also increase your energy, improve your sleep and mood, and save you money.

Ms Giorgi encouraged anyone concerned about their drinking or the drinking of someone they care about to reach out to support services.

“There are a range of online, phone, and face-to-face supports that people can reach out to if they are concerned about their alcohol use or that of someone in their lives,” she said.

Among these services are online support groups available on Hello Sunday Morning’s Daybreak app and via Sober in the Country’s anonymous Bush Tribe for rural and regional people.

You can also contact the National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline on 1800 250 015.

For more support services, visit FARE’s website: <https://fare.org.au/resources/library/>

**Caterina Giorgi, CEO, Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) is available for interview.**

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**FARE**

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) is the leading not-for-profit organisation working towards an Australia free from alcohol harms. We do this through developing evidence-informed policy, enabling people-powered advocacy and delivering health promotion campaigns.

FARE has been working with communities across the country to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians for 20 years. To learn more about us and our work visit [www.fare.org.au](http://www.fare.org.au)