

Steps to Help Reduce or Stop Drinking Alcohol

admin · Saturday, June 9th, 2007

What can help me to reduce or stop drinking alcohol?



No-one can **make** you stop or cut down drinking. You have to be committed and determined to do this yourself. However, it can be difficult, and one or more of the following may help.

Accepting the problem

Some people deny to themselves that they have a problem. The sort of thoughts that people deceive themselves with include: "I can cope", "I'm only drinking what all my mates drink", "I can stop anytime". Accepting that you may have a problem, and seeking help where necessary, are often the biggest steps to cutting back on alcohol, or cutting it out completely.

Self help

Some people are helped by books, websites, leaflets and their own determination. It is thought that about 1 in 3 people who have a problem with alcohol return to sensible drinking, or stop drinking, without any professional help. See the end of this leaflet for a list of resources.

Talking treatments

Some people are helped by counselling and advice from a practice nurse or doctor. Sometimes a referral to a specially trained counsellor may be advised. They can help you to talk through the issues in more detail and help you to plan how to manage your drinking. In some cases, more intensive talking treatments such as cognitive-behaviour therapy (CBT) may be appropriate. CBT helps you to change certain ways that you think, feel and behave, and may help some people with alcohol related problems.

Treating other illnesses

Alcohol may seem to be a 'quick' answer to the relief of stress, anxiety, depression, or other mental health problems. However, the effect is short-lived and drinking a lot of alcohol often makes these conditions worse. If you feel that these conditions are the underlying problem then see your doctor. Medication and talking treatments such as CBT often work well for these conditions, and are a much better long-term option than heavy drinking.

Detoxification ('detox')

This is an option if you are alcohol dependent.

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