



Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home, and life—brought to you by The Reschini Group



THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF CUTTING BACK ON ALCOHOL

Alcohol consumption is deeply woven into social and cultural norms, often seen as a way to unwind or celebrate. However, excessive drinking can lead to serious health issues. It may even lead to alcohol use disorder or addiction, which affects nearly 29 million Americans, according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

Cutting back on alcohol, even moderately, can positively impact your health and wellness. This article discusses alcohol's impact on your body and the benefits of reducing alcohol consumption.

Alcohol and Your Body

Alcohol has detrimental short and long-term effects on your body. Within minutes of entering your bloodstream, alcohol slows down your central nervous system, affecting how you behave, feel, and think. You may experience temporary symptoms, such as:

- Drowsiness
- Euphoria or giddiness
- Slowed or slurred speech
- Lowered inhibition
- Impulsiveness
- Loss of consciousness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Headache and dizziness

How quickly and how long you feel these effects vary depending on factors including your body weight, water consumption, how much alcohol you consume, and how fast you consume it. While these symptoms may not last long, it's crucial to be aware of them to avoid accidents and injuries.

In addition to these effects, heavy drinkers may face unwanted health consequences in the long term. Drinking excessively over a long period of time has been found to weaken the immune system, increasing the risk of pneumonia and tuberculosis. Too much alcohol may also result in:

- Concentration and memory issues
- Sleep problems, including insomnia
- Changes in libido and sexual performance
- Liver diseases
- Pancreatitis
- Cancers of the breast, colon, esophagus, liver, and throat



Health Benefits of Cutting Back on Alcohol

Research shows that reducing alcohol intake by any amount leads to improved health. When you cut back or stop drinking entirely, your body begins to heal over time, resulting in the following benefits:

- **Better sleep**—Drinking alcohol before bed can make you feel sleepy, but it disrupts your sleep cycle and interferes with circadian rhythms. As a result, you wake up frequently at night and get low-quality sleep. Cutting back on alcohol can improve your sleep quality, making you feel more rested.
- **Reduced stress**—When you drink less, your body releases lower levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, helping you feel calmer and less anxious.
- **Weight loss**—Alcohol is high in calories, which means reducing the amount you consume may help you drop some pounds. However, results vary per person. Heavy drinkers who eliminate alcohol for a longer period are more likely to lose weight than those who abstain for just a month.
- **Lower blood pressure**—Drinking less prevents the temporary spikes in blood pressure that occur after drinking. Over time, it can lead to a more stable and healthier blood pressure level, lowering your risk of developing hypertension.
- **Better immune response**—Cutting back on alcohol improves the production of cytokines, proteins that help fight off infections. Drinking less can also lead to a healthier gut microbiome and reduced oxidative stress, which are both crucial in immune function. Overall, drinking less helps reduce inflammation and allows your body to better fight off infections.
- **Improved liver health**—Your liver has a remarkable ability to recover from damage caused by excessive drinking. By reducing your alcohol intake, you allow your liver to regenerate and repair damaged tissue.

Develop Better Drinking Habits

The decision to cut back on alcohol can have an immediate and lasting positive effect on your health. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides an [interactive tool](#) to assess your drinking habits. If you're looking to reduce or eliminate alcohol from your life, consider the following tips:

- Try low-alcohol or nonalcoholic substitutes.
- Keep a drinking diary to track your alcohol consumption.
- Remove alcohol from your home and avoid storing it.
- Avoid people, events, or places that may tempt you to drink.
- Employ healthy coping mechanisms, such as going for a walk or talking to a friend.

Conclusion

Any effort to lower your alcohol intake or avoid it entirely can significantly improve your health and overall well-being. While social pressures and habits can make cutting back a challenge, the rewards of doing so are well worth the effort.

If you struggle to cut back or quit drinking alcohol, seek help from support groups, such as [Alcoholics Anonymous](#), or consult a health care professional. You can also contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's [National Helpline](#) or call 1-800-662-HELP (4357) to find help near you.