



NEW YEAR, NEW YOU... Let's have a Smart Start to your New Year! 09/01/12

As the bells chimed on the stroke of midnight and you welcomed in the New Year - it's out with the old and in with the new. We've all had a merry time with our family and friends and we've enjoyed the indulgences of the festive season but now - as we take time to reflect - too many of us will probably realise we're suffering from the effects of having a glass of wine, or a dram, too many.

The reality is that the festive season can become a bit like a drinking shopping list and without wanting to seem like a Scrooge we all merrily-roll-along to the next event. From starting Christmas day with bucks fizz to ending Hogmanay with that first foot tippie, there's always a reason to celebrate with a drink in hand. It might seem like great fun at the time but as we calculate our weight gain and recoil at the sight of our bank balances, all we have to show for our merriment could be an empty wallet, a sore head and a pile of empty booze bottles.

And, if we take stock you might be shocked to learn that, on average, we consume four times the recommended amount of alcohol during the festive season. Over the 12 days of Christmas we typically put away 18 pints of beer, three bottles of wine, one bottle of spirits and four glasses of fortified wine, leaving the majority of us with not only a fuzzy head, but an average weight gain of 5lbs too!

So, why not **make a positive change in 2012**? It might mean waving goodbye to cosy loungewear with expandable waists and digging out your trainers, or clearing the cupboards of the dregs of alcohol and stocking up on fresh fruit and veg, but it also means kick-starting the January detox and making a fresh start.

If you did make a toast to health, wealth and happiness then drinking less could be the only resolution you need! Here are some small achievable changes to help you stick to your resolution for a new year and a new you.

Cut down together

It's much easier to stay motivated if you make a commitment to drink less with friends, family and colleagues – that way you can remind each other of the benefits if your motivation wanes.

Think about ways to relax and enjoy yourself without drinking alcohol: why not have a kick around in the park, go to the cinema or have a long soak in the bath. Making time for activities, which aren't solely themed around drinking, allows you to spend quality time with people that wish to improve their health and well-being too.

Stick to your limits

Men should not regularly drink more than 3-4 units per day and women no more than 2-3 units per day. Cutting down on alcohol and drinking within your limits can have a positive effect on your overall health and well-being too. Alternate between an alcoholic drink and non-alcoholic ones, as doing this means you can half your alcohol consumption without much effort at all.

Ditch the rounds

When you get involved in ordering rounds you have to drink at the speed of the fastest drinker, which means you could be drinking more alcohol than you really want.

Drop a glass size

If you like a beer then order half pints or bottles, or choose a small glass of wine instead of the large option. Ordering a drink with a lower ABV (alcohol by volume) than your usual tippie also means you can consume less alcohol overall.

Organise designated alcohol-free days

If you feel like you've overdone it, give your body a rest by marking a couple of days every week on your calendar to stay booze-free. Excessive drinking over time can increase your risk of developing high blood pressure, liver disease and even cancer. By not drinking every day, your body gets a chance to recover, reducing the risk of long-term damage to your health.

And at home ...

If you're pouring your own drinks at home, it's easy to drink more than you realise. Try measuring your drinks using a unit measure cup, or pour a smaller glass of wine to help you stick to the sensible drinking guidelines.

Perth & Kinross Focus on Alcohol:

Perth & Kinross Focus on Alcohol has booklets available called "Cutting Down Your Drinking". These provide interesting information to support you to cut down, part of this booklet contains a "Drink Diary" which helps you measure your consumption of alcohol. This will be made available through our partners, but if you want to go on-line you can find this at: <http://eric/sites/drugalcoholawareness>. Go to the ADP Web-Pages and when you get there, scroll down the left hand Browse list to "Focus on Alcohol", click on this and it will take you to the web-page. On the right hand list you will find "Cutting Down Your Drinking" and "Drinks Diary".

You can find lots more useful hints and tips at www.drinksarter.org.

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