

- **Get support**

Try not to isolate yourself or shut yourself away. Make contact with others who can support you in **not** drinking. If you belong to a mutual aid group, talk about your feelings there. You will realise that you are not alone.

- Attend mutual aid groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or SMART Recovery.
- Phone DRINKLINE or AA if you need support when you are alone.
- Contact your local alcohol treatment centre.
- Invite friends round for a coffee, a bite to eat, or to watch a film.
- Consider joining a Church/ Mosque/ Synagogue/ Temple.
- Consider joining your local community centre.

- **Protect your recovery**

Keep focused on your own recovery. This means being vigilant to potential stresses and triggers that may undermine your attempts. Try to stay away from people who are still drinking.

**And FINALLY .....**

The longer you can go without drinking the stronger your chances are of avoiding relapse.

**GOOD LUCK!**

## Contact us

Specialised Services  
Petherton Resource Centre  
3 Petherton Road  
Hengrove  
Bristol  
BS14 9BP  
Telephone: 01275 796390

[www.awp.nhs.uk](http://www.awp.nhs.uk)

## PALS

To make a comment, raise a concern or make a complaint, please contact the Trust's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

Tel: 01225 362900  
Free phone: 0800 073 1778

Email: [awp.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:awp.PALS@nhs.net)

## Other formats and languages

If you need this information in other formats (such as large print, Braille) or in another language, please call the PALS number.

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Avon and Wiltshire  
Mental Health Partnership  
NHS Trust

# Early Days without drinking

## Tips & Ideas

Specialist Drug and Alcohol Service

**You matter, we care**

**If you have been drinking more than the recommended limits, do not just stop drinking. Please first get advice from your GP or another health professional, to help you to cut down or stop drinking safely.**

- **Get rid of all alcohol**

Tip it down the sink, give it away, and get rid of all alcohol, including the special bottle you thought you would save for guests or visitors.

If people in your home still drink, get them to at least keep it out of sight. Don't buy alcohol for anyone else; let them buy their own! Make sure others around you know that you have stopped drinking and ask that they do not automatically offer you alcohol

- **Stay away from places associated with alcohol**

This includes your "local", the off-licence, your drinking friend's flat. By being in the presence of alcohol, you are at risk of picking it up, especially in an unguarded moment. Even if you manage to resist the first time, discomfort, craving or resentment can sooner or later lead you to a lapse. You may feel confident and proud of your willpower when everyone around you is drinking, but why test yourself?

- **Structure your day and establish a routine**

Get up and go to bed at the same time. Think of other ways of spending your time that don't involve alcohol.

- **Eat regular meals**

If you feel full, you are less likely to want to drink. Make sure you have breakfast; you are less likely to get cravings if your blood sugar level is maintained. Eating regularly also means that you are less likely to feel irritable; which can be a trigger to drinking.

- **Eat healthily**

Try to eat a healthy diet with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. Allow yourself some treats. You may worry about putting on weight, but you are probably consuming far fewer calories than when you were on a "liquid diet".

- **Drink plenty of fluids**

Non-alcoholic of course! It is advisable to stay away from low alcohol or de-alcoholised drinks as they will remind you of the real thing, and may trigger cravings.

- **Get some physical exercise**

Walk, swim, or get down to the gym! Find something that you enjoy. Exercise will give you energy, relieve aches and pains, improve sleep and help you relax.

- **Learn to relax**

It is important to try and find something that you enjoy. It may be having a relaxing soak in the bath, listening to soothing music, reading a book, or using a relaxation tape. Try joining a yoga or mindfulness class.

- **Don't expect too much from others**

"I've changed" – People may have heard it all before. Like recovery, trust will take time to develop. You cannot expect others to change their thinking or lifestyle just because you have.

- **Avoid get tired**

Allow yourself rest time and try to get plenty of sleep. You are more likely to feel vulnerable or irritable if you are tired, and this can put you at risk of relapse.

- **Don't expect too much from yourself**

Take one day at a time. Keep busy but avoid putting yourself under pressure. Allow yourself time to focus on your recovery.

- **Allow yourself time to accept your feelings**

You may have been using alcohol as an anaesthetic, to numb feelings. When you stop drinking, it is usual to feel more emotional.

As time goes by your mood will level out. Try to talk to others about how you are feeling.

Remember that feelings of anger, depression or guilt can often trigger a desire to drink, and are sometimes used as an 'excuse'. Remind yourself that drinking is not a good long-term solution.