

# WELL BALANCED

- APRIL 2026 -  
Alcohol Awareness Month

## Drinking LESS FOR Better HEALTH

April is Alcohol Awareness Month, a reminder to highlight the importance of understanding how alcohol affects health and explore options for drinking less, or not at all, for those who may want to make changes to support their well-being. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), excessive alcohol use is responsible for 178,000 deaths per year in the United States. Furthermore, alcohol is the third leading preventable cause of cancer, as reported in the U.S. Surgeon General's 2025 Advisory on Alcohol and Cancer Risk. Gallup data, as reported by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, show that 54% of U.S. adults report drinking alcohol—the lowest rate in 90 years. This is just one example of how society is shifting toward lower alcohol consumption.

### Alcohol Consumption and Health Implications

The CDC classifies excessive alcohol use in the following ways.

- Binge drinking—four or more drinks for women and five or more drinks for men during one occasion
- Heavy drinking—eight or more drinks for women and 15 or more drinks for men in one week
- Any amount of drinking during pregnancy
- Any amount of drinking by people younger than 21

Moderate drinking is defined as two drinks or fewer per day for men and one drink or fewer per day for women. Research shows that the more alcohol a person consumes, the greater the risk of developing certain cancers, including mouth, throat, esophagus, voice box, breast, liver, and colon and rectum cancer. Excessive alcohol use is also linked to high blood pressure, heart disease, liver disease, stroke, digestive problems, weakened immune system, and alcohol use disorder. The American Heart



### Did You Know?

One standard drink is 12 oz of beer,  
5 oz of wine, or 1.5 oz of spirits.

Association (AHA) cautions that research has not proven a cause-and-effect link between alcohol consumption and improved heart health. Compounds found in red wine that may support heart health can also be found in foods such as grapes and blueberries, and the AHA does not recommend drinking wine or other alcoholic beverages for potential heart health benefits.

### Benefits of Drinking Less

Consuming less alcohol or choosing not to drink at all can benefit both physical and mental health. Some positive changes people may experience include:

- Feeling physically better due to fewer hangovers
- Sleeping better and experiencing more energy
- Improved judgment, decision making, and coordination
- Healthier relationships with friends and family
- Lower risk of injuries and overdose
- Improved overall health and reduced risk of cancer, heart disease, and liver disease
- Lower risk of depression and anxiety
- Reduced risk of memory problems
- Fewer problems at school or work.

## Tips to Make Changes to Drinking Habits

Whether you're trying to drink less or stop altogether, consider the steps below to help you achieve your drinking goals.

- **Bring awareness to current habits:** Consider tracking how much you drink and noting why you drink. This awareness can help you develop a plan for setting goals and limits.
- **Be mindful of temptations:** Pay attention to triggers such as people, places, activities, or emotions that may prompt drinking. Consider planning alternatives ahead of time and preparing ways to say "no" when needed. Other helpful strategies may include removing alcohol from the home, trying new social activities that don't involve drinking (such as a fitness class or hosting an alcohol-free board game or movie night), or using healthy coping tools like mindfulness, journaling, or other forms of self-care.
- **Modify drinking behaviors:** Simple adjustments, such as drinking slowly and with food, choosing beverages with lower alcohol content, alternating alcoholic drinks with water or nonalcoholic options, or enjoying mocktails, can help reduce overall intake.
- **Develop new routines.** Try alcohol-free days, weeks, or even months to see how you feel, and explore alternative ways to unwind such as physical activity, engaging in favorite hobbies, trying a new activity, or enjoying special nonalcoholic drinks.
- **Find support.** If you or someone you know is seeking support for alcohol use or misuse, visit the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for a list of free and confidential resources.



Interested in making a plan to drink less? Start by checking your alcohol intake with this [tool](#) from the CDC.

### Resources

- » Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) ([samhsa.gov](https://www.samhsa.gov))
- » National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc (NCADD) ([ncaddnational.org](https://www.ncaddnational.org))
- » Check Your Drinking ([cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov))

### Sources

- » <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2025/the-health-risks-of-drinking-alcohol>
- » <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/about-alcohol-use/index.html>
- » <https://www.cdc.gov/drink-less-be-your-best/drinking-less-matters/index.html>
- » <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/nutrition-basics/alcohol-and-heart-health>

