

# Is alcohol causing Problems in your life?

*It doesn't have to be like this.*



## A Lot of Kiwis Drink a Lot

Drinking is common in New Zealand, with 3.2 million adults having at least one drink in 2022. Excessive drinking is also relatively common with one in five adults participating in *hazardous drinking* during the same year.

While having a little alcohol can be enjoyable, drinking too much can cause problems like bad decisions, relationships problems, health issues and difficulties keeping up with studies. This shows that just because something is common, it doesn't mean it's all good.

It's important to note that these numbers are decreasing over time, showing that more and more people are deciding to reduce their drinking, or stop all together.

## Knowing Why You Drink Matters

People drink alcohol for many reasons: to relax, have fun, deal with stress, or fit in socially. Knowing why you drink can help address the root cause of the issue, allowing you to be happier and more comfortable in your own skin while sober.

For example, some people drink due to social anxiety. Acknowledging this allows them to address their anxious feelings directly, which can then lessen the urge to drink alcohol in the first place.

## You've Got Options

When it comes to changing your drinking habits, you have two main options: quitting alcohol completely or cutting down. Both approaches can lead to significant improvements in your life.

**Cutting Down:** Even making small reductions in your drinking can have big effects on your health and well-being. You might find yourself feeling more energetic, sleeping better, and having better relationships. It's about finding a balance that works for you and making gradual changes towards a healthier lifestyle.

**Quitting:** For some people, quitting alcohol altogether is the best option. This can be especially true for those with a genetic predisposition to alcoholism. For them, managing their alcohol use isn't possible, so quitting is necessary to avoid serious consequences. While it might sound daunting, many people successfully remove alcohol from their life and there is a huge amount of support available if this is what you decide.

**Whichever option you choose, Student Health Services are here to support you throughout your journey.** We can help you create a plan and consider different strategies to find what best suits you.

### **Tips for Cutting Down or Quitting**

1. **Seek Professional Support:** Contact one of many dedicated support services, such as Student Health Services, for free and confidential guidance and resources.
2. **Set Clear Goals:** Write down what you want to achieve and why it is important to you. Journal daily to organise your thoughts and track your progress.
3. **Build a Support Network:** Surround yourself with supportive people to encourage and hold you accountable. Join a club to socialise without alcohol.
4. **Find New Ways to Manage Emotions:** Try some strategies like yoga, meditation, going for a walk, or talking to one of the Mental Health & Wellbeing team at Student Health.
5. **Manage Triggers:** Create a plan to avoid people, places, or situations that trigger the urge to drink. This could involve changing routines, finding new social activities, or politely declining invitations where alcohol is present.
6. **Celebrate Progress:** Acknowledge and celebrate each milestone in your journey to cutting down or quitting drinking. Reward yourself for your efforts with healthy self-care.

## HPA Guidelines

If you decide to reduce your drinking, you might wonder how much is okay. The NZ Health Promotion Agency makes the following recommendations:



When some people read these guidelines, they feel discouraged, thinking there's no point in trying because they don't believe they will ever drink less than this.

It's important to understand that reducing your alcohol intake can still be beneficial, even if you haven't yet reached the recommended limits. The guidelines serve some people as a target – something to work towards.

In saying that, please know that the safest amount of alcohol to drink is none.

<b>Student Health</b>	07 838 4037
Free and confidential mental health & wellbeing support. Counselling specifically for substance issues is also available.	
<b>Alcohol and Drug Helpline</b>	0800 787 797
Free 24/7 support for anyone in New Zealand with a question or concern about their own or someone else's drinking or other drug use.	
<b>Healthline</b>	0800 611 116
Free 24/7 health advice, information and treatment from healthcare professionals.	
<b>Lifeline Aotearoa</b>	0800 543 354
Free 24/7 mental health guidance.	
<b>Need to Talk?</b>	1737
Free 24/7 service for anyone feeling down, anxious, a bit overwhelmed or just need to chat to someone. You can call or text 1737.	

## Taking the First Step

The hardest part is often taking that first step. Fear of judgment or consequences can sometimes prevent people from seeking the help they need.

Please know that Student Health prioritise your well-being and confidentiality. We are here to provide support with care and understanding.

If you have any questions or are ready to get some support. Please call one of the numbers listed above.