5 Smart Steps to Safer Drinking

1. Make Choices.

   Safer drinking means making choices. It takes thinking and planning.

   Here are some suggestions to keep in mind:
   - Decide how you’re going to drink before you are in a drinking situation. A single drink can lower your judgment.
   - Make a choice each time you drink. Just because you drink in one setting doesn’t mean you have to drink in every situation.
   - It’s not all or nothing. You can drink a beer and switch to soda or vice versa.
   - Talk with friends about your choice. Support each other’s decisions.

2. Learn About Alcohol.

   Serving size does matter. Each of the following contains the same amount of alcohol:
   - A 12-ounce can of beer
   - A 4-ounce glass of wine
   - A 10-ounce wine cooler
   - A 1-ounce shot of 100-proof liquor (straight or in a mixed drink)

   Your gender and body size affects how fast your body digests alcohol. On average, a 150-pound man can safely have one drink per hour. A 150-pound woman will need to drink a little more slowly than that.

3. Know Your Limits.

   Many things can affect your reaction. As a general rule, drinking will affect you more quickly:
   - The less you weigh
   - If you have eaten little or no food
   - If you have been ill
   - If you are taking prescription medicine or any other drug (Combining drugs—even over the counter drugs—can be very dangerous!)

4. Have A Plan.

   Here are some guidelines:
   - Drink slowly. Don’t gulp your drink down.
   - Allow time between drinks.
• Eat food before you drink. Eat with your drink.
• Drink water, soda, or juice between alcoholic drinks.
• Stop when you’ve reached your limit.
• Don’t mix drinking and driving.
• Plan how you will get home.

**Only time removes alcohol from your body.** You can’t sober up with coffee, fresh air, or a shower.

5. **Watch For Problems.**

**Alcoholism is a disease** that makes the body unable to process alcohol in a healthy way. Some people can’t use alcohol moderately.

**You may need help if:**

• Drinking is more important than being with your friends.
• You gulp alcohol and keep drinking more and more.
• There’s a big change in your behavior after only a little alcohol.
• You want to drink often or all the time.
• You find yourself sneaking drinks or hiding your drinking.
• You continue to drink after punishment and education.
• You continue to drink even if it hurts a close friend or loved one.