

The buzz about alcohol

Drinking at social events or bars and the ease that a little buzz provides make it hard to limit yourself when friends gather around a pitcher of beer.

Dennis Donovan, director of the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute at the University of Washington, has advice for how to drink moderately—or not at all.

- Count your drinks. In many cases, people lose track of how much they've had. This is especially true when sharing a pitcher of beer and someone refills the glass.
- Know a standard serving size. Large wine glasses, higher alcohol content in some beers, and generous liquor pours in mixed drinks make the "I only had one!" claim questionable.
- One drink, one hour. Most people's bodies can process about one drink per hour. Pace yourself to one drink an hour or so, and every hour or two you might take a drink "off" and have water or another non-alcoholic beverage instead. Also, make sure to eat.
- Ginger ale looks like a cocktail. Teetotalers not wanting to attract attention or questions can stick to ginger ale or other non-alcoholic drinks that look like cocktails.
- Say no. Firmly, confidently turn down drinks and become resistant to social pressure and arm-twisting. Practice saying: "No, I've reached my limit" or "I'm not drinking tonight."

