



Alcohol use over the Festive Season

Christmas is around the corner and who doesn't love a Christmas party and a mince pie, or two, or three? But this is a time when many people find themselves drinking more than they usually do.

Below are the **10 top tips of Christmas** to see people safely and healthily through the Festive season and into 2020.

If you choose to drink alcohol this Christmas:

1. Keep in mind the Chief Medical Officers' low risk drinking guidelines and try not to drink more than 14 units, which is six standard glasses of 13% wine or six pints of 4% beer, in any week
2. If you choose to drink this much, then spread the drinking over three or more days and avoid binge drinking.
3. **Drinkaware's app** is there to help people track and calculate their units so that they can see their progress over time.
4. Don't drink on an empty stomach. Have a healthy meal before you go out or start drinking, and snacks between drinks can help to slow down the absorption of alcohol, helping you stay in control
5. If you're heading out to a Christmas party, make your plans in advance on how you will get home, with a licensed taxi, and with people that you trust. Remember that lone males can be vulnerable too
6. Pace yourself by alternating any alcoholic drinks with water or soft drinks and avoid drinking in rounds, which may make you drink more and faster than you intended
7. Try downsizing your alcoholic drinks- it will help you to drink less and reduce the number of calories that you are taking on board
8. Try having a no or low alcohol alternative or an alcohol-free mocktail – they are just as tasty
9. Avoid drinking before you go out, what some people call 'preloading'– it's very easy for the drinks to stack up that way. Drinking too much too quickly can affect your breathing, heart rate, body temperature and gag reflex and potentially lead to a coma and death
10. Keep warm and always take a coat. Alcohol makes blood flow to the blood vessels near your skin and away from the core of your body. If you then go out in the cold after drinking, you can lose heat very easily and quickly. And that can be dangerous. **If you are concerned about someone call 999 immediately**

And looking ahead to 2020: The New Year is a fantastic opportunity for people to really look at the amount of alcohol they drink and, where necessary, to make long lasting changes to their drinking that can benefit their health and wellbeing.



Looking after your Mental Health

Christmas can be a joyful time of the year, filled with festivities, food, parties and time with loved ones. However, for some people, it can also be one of the hardest times of the year. Christmas can bring about feelings of obligation and over-commitment to social plans. Some people may experience anxiety, loneliness and isolation. Others may find the disruption to their routines destabilising.

If you need someone to talk to then Samaritans are available on **116 123** (UK) for free, 24/7. They are there to talk to, listen and they won't judge or tell you what to do.

The Retreat (Mental Health Drop in 4:30pm – 12 midnight) **01202 584400**

Kooth – Online counselling, advice & support for young people

For support in a crisis, Text **Shout** to **85258** (Free). If you're experiencing a personal crisis, are unable to cope and need support. Shout can help with urgent issues such as: Suicidal thoughts, abuse or assault, self-harm, bullying, relationship challenges.

If you are feeling like ending your life, please call **999** or go to A&E and ask for the contact of the nearest crisis resolution team. These are teams of mental health care professionals who work with people in severe distress.

