

# Swipe away your drinking problem

November 10 2016, by Joost Bruysters

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Credit: University of Twente

An app has been developed that helps people struggling with alcohol addiction to reduce their alcohol intake, or to quit drinking completely.

A study into the effectiveness of the app, called 'Breindebaas', will commence on 10 November. The researchers involved are now looking

for people who want to try the app for a period of several weeks.

The app was developed by the University of Twente, Tactus addiction treatment, Saxion University of Applied Sciences and the University of Amsterdam. Researchers from this consortium will also jointly conduct the study. The aim of the app is to disrupt the subconscious processes that feed [alcohol addiction](#). The app shows [study participants](#) of all kinds of beverages along with the simple instruction to pull non-alcoholic beverages towards them using a swiping motion, and to push [alcoholic beverages](#) away. Ideally, participants do this as quickly as possible in order to unlearn unconscious associations. The app must be used twice a week for a period of three weeks, with each training session lasting ten minutes. The hypothesis is that repeated training will alter the brain's reaction and thought patterns.

## **Fewer relapses**

The app is based on an existing training programme which was developed at the University of Amsterdam and which has proven its effectiveness. According to Marloes Postel, who is leading the study, addicts who receive this training at a rehabilitation centre are ten percent less likely to relapse within a year (with relapse rates decreasing from 50% to 40%). "That's a very good result in addiction care." Postel hopes the app will help make this [training programme](#) accessible to a wide audience. "Many addicts are reluctant to seek help through standard addiction care." However, Postel does not think that the app alone will suffice in the battle against alcohol addiction. "The app can be used as part of regular addiction care programmes, or it can serve as a first step to regular addiction care."

## **Study**

A study into the app's effectiveness will commence on 10 November. Key questions will be whether the app does in fact lead to a reduction in alcohol consumption, and if users are satisfied with it. Anyone over the age of 18, in possession of a smartphone or tablet and who would like to reduce their [alcohol intake](#) can participate. Participation in the study is simple. Participants will be asked to complete a short questionnaire three times over the course of the study, and to use the app twice a week for a period of three weeks. In total, participants will spend approximately 1.5 hours on the study. The deadline for participation is 22 November, and you can sign up at [www.breindebaasapp.nl](http://www.breindebaasapp.nl). Five gift vouchers of 100 euros will be raffled off among the participants.

Provided by University of Twente

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