

Research finds counting your drinks reduces alcohol consumption

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The most effective way for Australians to reduce their alcohol consumption is counting their drinks, new research led by Curtin University has found.

The research, published in the journal Addictive Behaviours, found that the most effective 'protective behavioural strategy' (PBS), aimed at helping drinkers control their [alcohol intake](#), was keeping count of their [alcoholic drinks](#).

Co-author John Curtin Distinguished Professor Simone Pettigrew, from the School of Psychology at Curtin University, said the research aimed to assess the relationship between 16 types of protective behaviours, such as drinking slowly, eating at the same time or spacing drinks with water, and [alcohol consumption](#) among Australians.

"Excessive [alcohol consumption](#) is a major public health concern and is the third leading contributor to the burden of disease behind tobacco and obesity. We were intrigued to see what actually worked to reduce alcohol consumption over time," Professor Pettigrew said.

"The aim of our study was to identify which strategies are most strongly related to reduced alcohol consumption. The results showed that out of the 16 different strategies investigated in this study, 11 were ineffective, four were related to increased alcohol consumption, and only one – counting your drinks – resulted in lower levels of alcohol consumption over time."

The four strategies that increased alcohol consumption over the four-week period included asking a friend to let you know when you have had enough to drink, putting extra ice in your drink, using a designated driver, and leaving drinking venues at a pre-determined time.

Professor Pettigrew noted that further research was needed to explain the ineffectiveness of the other protective behavioural strategies.

"The 'counting your drinks' strategy was effective across various demographic groups, indicating that it could potentially be a strategy

used by health organisations hoping to reduce alcohol-related harm in Australia," Professor Pettigrew said.

The research, funded by Healthway, was co-authored by researchers from the School of Psychology at Curtin University, Cancer Council Victoria, and the University of Newcastle.

More information: Maria R. Dekker et al. A longitudinal examination of protective behavioral strategies and alcohol consumption among adult drinkers, *Addictive Behaviors* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/j.addbeh.2018.06.017](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2018.06.017)

Provided by Curtin University

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