

Dry January strategies and benefits you might not have considered

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Taking a break from drinking alcohol even for just one month can lead to surprising and significant improvements in both physical and mental health, according to Jennifer Steiner, an assistant professor at Florida

State University.

While giving up [alcohol](#) in a society where [social events](#) often revolve around [drinking](#) may seem difficult, Steiner says the potential benefits of a Dry January make it worthwhile to consider.

Taking a break from alcohol in January can lead to several [health benefits](#), says Steiner, who teaches and researches various topics related to nutrition and [exercise science](#):

- Your [cancer risk](#), [blood pressure](#), and weight may go down.
- Your liver could start to heal in just two weeks.
- You may feel less stressed and sleep better.
- Your digestion and nutrient absorption may improve.

Steiner suggests several strategies to navigate this challenge successfully:

1. Understand why you are drinking. If you are drinking to relieve stress then finding other ways to lessen stress will be important like exercising, calling a friend, journaling, watching a calming show or trying a new hobby. If drinking has become a habit, you enjoy in your daily or weekly routine then finding a new habit to replace it may work best. For example, replacing drinking with a snack or another enjoyed food, or an activity like taking a walk or going for a drive which takes you out of the house and away from temptation may help. Establishing another (healthier) behavior to replace drinking is important.
2. Have an accountability partner. Doing the challenge alone or in a house where a partner or other roommates are still actively consuming alcohol will make it much harder for you to abstain. If possible, find someone who can provide encouragement, support and remind you why you are doing this challenge. Many people who stop drinking find that their friend groups slowly

change over time as they spend more time with those who don't drink or are at least supportive of their new lifestyle.

3. Set yourself up success. Don't have any alcohol that is easy to grab in the house. Make plans with friends that don't center around alcohol. Avoid places like bars where the main thing to do is drink.
4. Have a plan in place if you are going to be in a tempting situation. If you will be going out with friends make sure they know you are abstaining from alcohol and ensure there will be non-alcoholic drink options. Explain to friends how important this challenge is to you and express your wishes for them not to try to sabotage it. If the situation becomes uncomfortable, remove yourself (if possible).
5. Remember your why. The stronger your resolve and motivation to achieve your goal the more likely you will. At the start of the month, establish how you will reward yourself if you complete the challenge and tell an accountability partner. If you feel the urge to drink, remind yourself of the reward and the reasons you are doing the challenge.

If you are able to stop drinking for the month, you may ultimately end up drinking less alcohol even after the challenge ends, Steiner said.

To establish healthier long-term habits around [alcohol consumption](#), she recommends remembering that alcohol is toxic to the body and treating it as a delicacy for special occasions may be beneficial. Reflect on the [positive changes](#) experienced during the abstinent period, such as improved sleep, increased energy, and clearer thinking.

Provided by Florida State University

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