

# The lesser-known health benefit of Dry January: Cancer prevention

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As we begin 2024, resolutions to eat healthier and exercise more are likely on many minds. This year, you may consider adding another: Reducing alcohol or taking a break altogether. Many people have also

started to participate in "Dry January"—a month-long vow to go alcohol-free.

Beyond the well-known health benefits of improved sleep, clearer skin, increased energy and shedding extra weight, ditching [alcohol](#) offers another often-overlooked advantage—reducing your risk of cancer.

Research shows a link between [alcohol consumption](#) and an increased risk of several cancers, including head and neck, esophageal, liver, breast and colorectal. Emerging evidence also suggests a connection to melanoma, prostate, and pancreatic cancers.

Alcohol damages the DNA in our bodies' cells, impairs nutrient absorption, promotes inflammation, and disrupts hormones—all factors that can increase cancer risk.

Whether you're considering Dry January or a long-term reduction in your alcohol intake, here are some tips for success:

- Set clear goals. Decide if you want to abstain completely or adopt a low-alcohol approach.
- Find your "why." Remind yourself why reducing alcohol is important to you, whether it's [cancer prevention](#), improved sleep, or simply a desire to feel your best.
- Find alternatives. Explore non-alcoholic beverages that satisfy your cravings. Sparkling water with a splash of fruit juice, herbal teas, and mocktails are great options.
- Plan ahead. Stock up on your favorite alternatives and choose situations where alcohol is less of a center of activity.
- Get support. Tell family and friends know about your goals—their encouragement can make all the difference. You may also consider joining [online communities](#) or connecting with friends who share the same goals.

Dry January serves as an excellent starting point for adopting a healthier relationship with alcohol all year long. Even for those who choose to drink, moderation is key. The U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommend limiting alcohol to two drinks or less per day for men and one drink or less for women. A standard size drink is 12 ounces of regular beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof liquor.

Quitting alcohol cold turkey can be dangerous for some individuals. If you engage in binge or [heavy drinking](#), it is best to first consult your doctor for guidance and safe reduction strategies.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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