



Thinking About Drinking

How much is too much ... and how it can impact your health.

Throughout history you'll find no shortage of quotes praising the pleasures of alcohol. Celebrated in story and song, its use has been woven throughout the human experience ever since the first grains were fermented thousands of years ago. But as another historical quote says, "Alcohol makes a good servant and a poor master." Let's look at ways to ensure that alcohol does not gain control over our lives.

Five questions about alcohol's impact on your life.

Is alcohol playing an out-sized role in your life? Here are five questions that can help determine the answer:

- Do you drink to cope with stress or deal with other problems?
- Are there times when you drink more than you intended?
- Is your personal life – relationships, family — negatively impacted by drinking?
- Is your work suffering due to drinking — missing days, forgetting assignments, feeling too hungover to work?
- Do you feel anxious or irritable when not drinking?

Answering “yes” to any of these questions does not necessarily indicate a long-term alcohol problem, but knowing the warning signs can help us take a step back and re-calibrate our alcohol use.

Alcohol and your health: What to know.

If you ask most people which part of the body is most affected by alcohol, most would say the liver. It’s true that the liver — an organ that’s tasked with ridding your body of toxins — certainly works overtime when alcohol is present and long-term alcohol use often leads to cirrhosis and liver failure. However, the entire body is impacted by alcohol use, including:

- The brain and neurological system
- The gut and immune system
- The cardiovascular system
- The pancreas and lungs

Knowing the widespread impact that alcohol has on our bodies, it makes sense to moderate drinking, or in some cases, avoid it all together.

Cutting back on alcohol means cutting out certain behaviors.

Drinking in bars can lead to an excessive intake because of the party atmosphere and social pressure. However, drinking alone can mean that no one is watching and we’re not held accountable to our limits.

Lifestyle changes, such as finding pleasurable activities that don’t involve drinking, can have an overall positive impact on your health. For example, taking a walk or a hike to relieve stress or anxiety that would normally cause you to drink. Avoiding bars and going to a movie instead. Replacing drinks with a healthy, non-alcoholic alternative and making that your “go-to” choice at social gatherings.

When it’s time to quit drinking, don’t go it alone.

For most individuals with a recognizable alcohol problem, quitting can be difficult and cannot be done alone. Fortunately, there are resources that can help.

The Saint John Vianney Center offers a Holistic Recovery Program created for priests and religious. This includes a comprehensive, individualized treatment model that often incorporates a twelve-step philosophy. The goal is to help addicted individuals make significant behavioral changes that facilitate sober living. To learn more, contact the [*Saint John Vianney Center*](#).

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