

# UW-Health: Health expert offers tips for Dry January

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MADISON, Wis. – January is often the time for health and wellness-related resolutions, including “Dry January,” when participants choose not to drink alcohol for the first month of the year. Health experts offer input on this trend and outline some good reasons to cut back on drinking in 2022.

Numerous studies have shown that alcohol sales and drinking have increased since the very first week of the pandemic, particularly among women, according to Dr. Noelle LoConte, medical oncologist, University of Wisconsin Carbone Cancer Center, and associate professor of medicine, UW School of Medicine and Public Health.

“This is concerning, because there are so many short-term and long-term health risks associated with excessive drinking,” LoConte said. “Including an increased risk for colorectal cancer, breast cancer, and cancers of the mouth, throat, liver and more.”

Globally, an estimated 4.1% of new cancer cases in 2020 were attributable to alcoholic beverages, according to a new [study](#) published in American Association for Cancer Research Journals, of which LoConte is an author. The study also notes that scientists now believe that any amount of alcohol an individual drinks at least somewhat increases that person’s risk for developing certain cancers.

“Those of us working in cancer care and cancer research are working to have more people understand that alcohol does more than cause a hangover, it actually can cause cancer,” she said.

Whether you’re trying Dry January or reexamining your alcohol intake,

LoConte offers the following tips:

- Try to maintain moderate drinking or less. Moderate drinking is defined as one drink or less per day for women, two drinks or less per day for men.
- Talk to your physician if you are struggling with alcohol dependence, addiction, or overuse to get resources and support for cutting back or quitting.
- Stay hydrated. Drink water whenever you are drinking alcohol.
- Try to regularly replace alcohol with healthier alternative beverages like water, tea and juice, or try mocktails or non-alcoholic beer.
- Share your goals with family and friends or on social media to find support or to keep yourself accountable.
- Invite friends or family to join you in Dry January. Or connect with an online community for support and encouragement.
- Avoid binge drinking, which can often happen if you have recently taken a break from alcohol. Binge drinking is defined as four or more drinks during a single occasion for women, five or more for men.

Binge drinking can lead to alcohol poisoning, motor vehicle crashes and risky behaviors, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“There is still a lot we don’t know about the connections between cancer and alcohol, but we do want people to know there is a connection and to be mindful of how much they’re drinking,” LoConte said. “The pandemic has led a lot of people to drink more, and we don’t want to see folks live through a pandemic only to come to us as patients with cancer down the line if we can prevent that.”