



## Slowing Down Your Drinking

You may be beginning to drink less in risky situations, but you may still be having difficulties. A common difficulty is slowing down your speed of drinking. If you want to drink less but still want to enjoy other people's company while drinking then *you must drink more slowly*.

This can be very difficult because drinking is a habit, and habits are hard to break. There follows some hints on how to slow down your drinking.

### 1) Pace yourself

- How much do you plan to drink?
- For how long do you intend to drink?
- How long must each drink last?

Answer these questions each time *before* you drink. For example your answers might be:

- I plan to drink 8 units
- I will go out at 8.30 and come back at 11.00
- One pint must last 2½ hours divided by 4 – roughly 1 pint every 40 minutes.

You may think 40 minutes for one pint is too long, but you can learn with the help of some of the hints that follow.

### 2) Take smaller sips

As well as planning how long each drink should take, slow down the rate at which you sip your drink. Sip less often and take smaller sips. Count the number of sips it takes to finish your glass, then try increasing the number on the next glass.

### 3) Put your glass down between sips

Don't warm your drink in your hand. Put it down on a table or shelf after each sip. If it's in your hand, you'll drink it more often.

### 4) Occupy yourself

Don't just drink! Do something else enjoyable while drinking that will help distract you from the glass and drink more slowly. Here are a few things you can do:

Reading, chatting, playing games such as darts, pool, draughts, dominoes etc, eating (beware of crisps and nuts that make you thirsty), listen to music.

### 5) Change your drink

Familiar drinks of old drinking days will give you the urge to drink like that again. Be adventurous – try stout instead of bitter, bitter instead of lager, lager instead of cider. If you drink spirits, change to a different one and make it a long drink with tonic or other mixers. The only thing to beware of is choosing new drinks that are stronger than you think. Find out the strength of everything you try.

### 6) Drink for the taste

Savour the taste of your drink. Let it rest on your tongue and enjoy the flavour – don't just swill it down.

### 7) Don't drink beer and spirits together

Why? Because you take in alcohol much faster this way.

### **8) What about rounds?**

If you regularly drink in a round-buying group, ask yourself whether you are drinking more than you would choose to if you were not in a round. There are a number of hints for dealing with this tricky problem:

- Why not say to the group that you will buy your own drinks and explain why? If they reject you because of this were they worthwhile friends anyway?
- If this is difficult, buy one round (so they know you aren't mean) then 'go solo'.
- Or you can simply not buy yourself a drink when it is your turn to buy. That way you save money and drink less.
- You can order a 'spacer'

### **9) Try a 'spacer' instead of a 'chaser'**

A spacer is a non-alcoholic drink, which you take in-between alcoholic ones – to space them out. That way you slow down your drinking. You will be surprised how good and refreshing a spacer can be between alcoholic drinks. Or how about trying a non-alcoholic beer?

Or, just refuse drinks every so often and accept the fact that you will pay out more than you will drink. If you get too drunk, you won't appreciate the extra drink anyway.

Finally, ask yourself whether this group in which you drink might be a 'risky situation' which is better avoided. If this is the case, maybe the simplest way of avoiding rounds is to drop out of the group and drink with other, smaller groups of people. You may be surprised to find that someone else in the group feels the way you do. Try talking to some of them on their own to find out.

### **10) Imitate the slower drinker**

Is there someone in the pub or in your company at home who drinks slowly? Then watch them! Become their shadow. Don't pick up your glass until they do, take small sips, do something else with your hands instead of lifting the glass to your lips.