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Look after your liver during freshers' week

Freshers' week is all about new people, new places and new experiences. It's exciting – but it can be daunting too. And it can be tempting to take the edge off any anxiety with a drink or two.

When you add in a dose of peer pressure, or simply the desire to impress your new mates, you could end up drinking far more than ever before. Despite government figures suggesting that [16 to 24-year-olds drink less than any other age group](#), many students will be suffering from serious hangovers during fresher's week.

Drinking too much can have unwanted consequences, from the downright humiliating to the dangerous; more than 45,000 under-24s were admitted to hospital in England in 2013/14 thanks to alcohol. But you can survive freshers' week with your liver – and dignity – intact.

Eat before you go out

Food slows down the rate at which alcohol is absorbed into your bloodstream, according to charity [Drinkaware](#). The best choices are foods that release energy slowly – go for a mixture of protein and carbs, such as chicken or fish and pasta or potatoes.

Don't pre-load

It's tempting to drink before you go out to save money, but the danger is you'll get drunk quickly and could miss out on most of the evening. Ideally, avoid 'pre-drinking' altogether but if you do it, choose a long drink such as beer. Give hand-poured spirits a miss too, as it's easy to drink far more than you realise.

Know your units

Keeping tabs on how much you're drinking is a good habit to get into. Adults should drink no more than two to three units a day, which amounts to one pint of standard-strength (5%) lager, beer or cider, or two to three single pub measures (25ml) of spirits, or one medium to large glass of 12% ABV (alcohol by volume) wine.

In 2016, the [weekly units for men were cut to 14, down from 21 units](#), so they're now the same as for women. It's also recommended that you have at least two to three dry days a week. Use the [Drinkaware app](#) to keep an eye on your units.

Beware of bingeing

While alcohol-free days are important, it's a bad idea to save up your units for one or two days. A report by the Department of Healthy in 2016 found that drinking between five and seven units in one session has been found to raise the risk of accidents and injuries between two to five times.

Binge drinking also lowers your inhibitions and judgment, putting you at greater risk of danger, and over time it can affect mood and memory. The worst-case scenario is alcohol poisoning, which is potentially fatal. Learn to spot the signs of [alcohol poisoning](#) and what to do.

Pace yourself

It takes up to an hour for your body to process one unit of alcohol, so make your drinks last. Choose long drinks over shots, and drink water either alongside or between alcoholic drinks. This will slow down your drinking and keep you hydrated, helping to fend off tomorrow's hangover. Or simply go for a soft drink.

Avoid big rounds

They are expensive and you'll end up keeping pace with the fastest drinker. Everyone metabolises alcohol at a different rate too, [depending on their gender and size](#). So if you're a nine stone woman, don't try to keep up with a 13 stone man.

This isn't sexist – it's medical fact! The body holds alcohol in water, and because women have proportionally less water than men their blood alcohol levels become more concentrated.

Pick events wisely

If you're not interested in drinking, a pub crawl is an obvious no-no but there are lots of arts and activity-based events to attend. You could also try a night out at an alcohol-free bar – there are a number of 'dry bars' now in big cities such as London, Manchester, Nottingham and Liverpool.

Resist peer pressure

Many universities have banned alcohol-fuelled initiation rites to clubs and societies, some of which have resulted in the deaths of students due to alcohol poisoning or accidents. But drinking games still go on.

If you're not comfortable with something, don't do it. It's your body and being responsible for your own actions is part of being an adult. In the long run, most people will respect you more for standing your ground, and you won't end up untagging yourself from embarrassing photos on social media.

If they don't, find some new friends – there's probably plenty of people feeling just the same way you do.

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