THE
MARYLEBONE
PRACTICE

How drinking less can support sleep, energy & healthy ageing

Sleep, fitness, healthy ageing – and why a few alcohol-free days each week can make a difference



Rethinking the Evening Drink

How drinking less can support sleep, energy and healthy ageing

The way we drink can become part of the background of everyday life — woven into dinners, celebrations and the ritual of winding down. Taking a closer look can be a thoughtful act of self-care, especially when the aim is not perfection but a pattern that supports how you want to feel.

A few alcohol-free days each week offer a simple place to begin. They create room to notice your sleep, energy, recovery and mood, while still leaving space for the occasions you genuinely value.

Practical takeaway
Choose three or four alcohol-free days each week. Treat them as a regular part of your routine, rather than as a punishment or a reset, and notice whether your sleep, energy and next mornings feel different.

Sleep: feeling tired is not always the same as sleeping well

Alcohol can make you feel sleepy at first, which is one reason it can seem like a useful way to unwind. But as the night progresses, it can make sleep lighter and more broken, with earlier waking for some people.

This can create a familiar pattern: falling asleep quickly, then starting the next day without feeling properly restored. Trying several alcohol-free evenings gives you a simple way to compare how you feel after different kinds of nights.

Key insight
If your evening drink is part of your sleep routine, changing the routine may be as important as changing the drink. A calm wind-down, a consistent bedtime and a few alcohol-free nights can help you see the difference.

Fitness and recovery: more than the workout itself

Progress in fitness depends on what happens between sessions as much as on the session itself. Alcohol can affect hydration, sleep and how refreshed you feel, all of which can make recovery feel more difficult.

Reducing your intake may not transform every workout overnight, but it can make it easier to keep a steady rhythm: training when planned, recovering afterwards and having enough energy for ordinary movement during the week.

Weight and metabolic health: small changes can add up

Alcohol contains calories, and drinks can also come with added sugar or be accompanied by foods you might not otherwise choose. Drinking less can therefore reduce overall energy intake, particularly when it replaces regular drinking rather than being added to your usual routine.

The most helpful question is not “Which drink is healthiest?” but “What pattern works for my goals?” Fewer occasions, smaller measures and alcohol-free alternatives can all be part of a realistic approach to weight and metabolic health.

Keep the perspective
Changing your drinking pattern is one possible part of looking after your health. It does not replace balanced food, regular movement, sleep or advice tailored to your own circumstances.

Long-term health and longevity: lower exposure, lower risk

There is no completely risk-free level of drinking, and health risks generally increase as alcohol intake increases. The relationship is not identical for everyone: personal history, genetics, medicines and other health factors all matter.

Drinking less reduces your exposure to alcohol-related harm over time. That does not promise a particular outcome, but it is a sensible, evidence-informed step within a broader approach to healthy ageing.

Mood and the next morning: noticing the whole cycle

A drink may feel relaxing in the moment, yet the following morning can bring disrupted sleep, lower energy or a flatter mood. For some people, alcohol can also make feelings of anxiety or low mood harder to manage.

A short period of drinking less can be useful not because it proves a single cause, but because it gives you information. Pay attention to your sleep, concentration, mood and motivation without judging yourself for what you notice.

Simple changes for real life

The most sustainable changes are usually specific and easy to repeat. You might try:

- ☐ **Planning alcohol-free days** — choose three or four days that fit your week.
- ☐ **Changing the default** — keep a tempting alcohol-free option available at home.

- [ ] **Making measures visible** — use a smaller glass or measure rather than pouring by instinct.
- [ ] **Slowing the pace** — alternate an alcoholic drink with water or another alcohol-free drink.
- [ ] **Reviewing, not restricting** — notice what changes and adjust your plan with curiosity.

A note on stopping suddenly
If you drink heavily, drink every day, or have experienced withdrawal symptoms, seek medical advice before stopping suddenly. A clinician can help you reduce alcohol safely and discuss support that is right for you.

Sustainable healthy living – and Sober October

Drinking less can support the foundations of healthy living: better opportunities for restorative sleep, more consistent energy, and a clearer view of the habits that help you feel well. The aim is not perfection. It is to find a pattern you can live with and return to.

Sober October can be a useful prompt to experiment with a longer alcohol-free period, reflect on what you notice and decide what you want to carry forward. Whether you take part for a month or begin with three or four alcohol-free days each week, a measured change can be meaningful.

Further reading

- NHS: Alcohol advice
- NHS: Calculating alcohol units
- NHS: Tips on cutting down alcohol

Looking for personalised advice?
Your ideal approach depends on your health, your current drinking pattern and what you want to change. Contact **The Marylebone Practice** on 0203 026 3881 to book an appointment and discuss a plan tailored to you.

You can also contact our team by email at office@themarylebonepractice.com