# Alcohol and heart health: How cutting back can be a strong move for your heart

You may know that in order to sustain good heart health, you need to be mindful of how much red meat you eat, limit your salt intake, and eat a healthy amount of vegetables, fruit and wholegrains.

But, did you know that reducing your alcohol intake can also help keep your heart healthy and strong?

For Heart Week, FARE is looking at how alcohol increases the risk of cardiovascular disease - and steps we can each take to cut back.

## How does alcohol impact heart health?

Firstly, [Australia's Alcohol Guidelines](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/alcohol) advise that healthy adults who drink alcohol should have no more than 4 standard drinks in a day, or 10 standard drinks in a week, to reduce the risk of alcohol-related harms.

The [Heart Foundation says](https://assets.contentstack.io/v3/assets/blt8a393bb3b76c0ede/blta7814db317256aee/65dabfde588ffd635bb69085/Position-Statement-Alcohol.pdf) the less you drink, the lower your risk of alcohol-related harms, like stroke, hypertension, coronary heart disease and acute cardiovascular events.

Some of the ways that alcohol heightens the risk of cardiovascular disease risk are an effect on heart rhythm and blood pressure, lipid regulation, inflammation, platelet aggregation and coagulation.

The [Heart Foundation also advises](https://assets.contentstack.io/v3/assets/blt8a393bb3b76c0ede/blta7814db317256aee/65dabfde588ffd635bb69085/Position-Statement-Alcohol.pdf) people who are at higher risk or have cardiovascular disease to drink less or not at all, as alcohol increases the risk of cardiomyopathy, atrial fibrillation and flutter, strokes and hypertensive heart disease.

## What about low levels of alcohol?

In 2022, the World Health Federation released a [policy brief](https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fworld-heart-federation.org%2Fnews%2Fno-amount-of-alcohol-is-good-for-the-heart-says-world-heart-federation%2F&data=05%7C02%7CMatthew.Johnson%40fare.org.au%7Cbdb3c598a0814e53fd3708dc73a0f4af%7C529fe962c9ab412f8a3ca9731674181d%7C0%7C0%7C638512382353348724%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=2qhc6hHr9YDxkyKv3BCb7Ea3sLHJrbijn9VEEzLOJaY%3D&reserved=0) that outlined that any level of alcohol use can lead to loss of healthy life.

The [Heart Foundation recommends](https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.heartfoundation.org.au%2Fblog%2Falcohol-and-heart-health&data=05%7C02%7CMatthew.Johnson%40fare.org.au%7Cbdb3c598a0814e53fd3708dc73a0f4af%7C529fe962c9ab412f8a3ca9731674181d%7C0%7C0%7C638512382353353568%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=5q%2FwbyiAOpQrP1sdWQhcG0PicFuTRd%2FMTU4eO4OAKEE%3D&reserved=0) that ‘the less you drink, the better your heart health.’

## What are some ways to cut back?

There are [many strategies](https://fare.org.au/resources/tips-and-tools/) to help you reduce the amount of alcohol you drink.

Committing to alcohol-free days can be a fantastic circuit-breaker for starting or resetting habits to cut back, and can also support other heart-healthy habits like physical activity.

If you do choose to drink, setting a limit, drinking slowly and choosing drinks with no or low alcohol content can help.

When organising catch-ups with friends or family, suggest a walk around the park with a takeaway coffee, a picnic full of heart-healthy foods, or a new activity like a dance class.

By taking conscious steps to cut down on drinking alcohol, we can all ensure our hearts are as healthy as they can be.