

Safer Drinking Tips

Many trans and queer community spaces are centered around drinking. While some folks enjoy celebrating and connecting this way, alcohol isn't for everyone. If you do choose to attend events where alcohol is present, it can be helpful to consider some safety tips and strategies when drinking or spending time with others who are drinking.

These tips take a **harm reduction** approach to drinking. There is always some degree of risk associated with drinking alcohol, but we can all take steps to reduce that risk when we use alcohol or spend time with others who do.



1. Keep an eye on your friends. If you are going out in a group, plan to arrive and leave together. If you decide to leave early, let your friends know. Don't be afraid to let a friend know if something is making you uncomfortable or if you have safety concerns.

2. Have a backup plan. Sometimes plans change quickly. You might realize that it's not safe for you to drive home, or the group you arrived with might decide to go somewhere you don't feel comfortable. Keep the number of a reliable friend, or rideshare app, saved in your phone or written down. Consider bringing a charger for your phone in case you run out of battery.

3. Eat and drink (water) while you're out! If your stomach is empty when you start drinking, the alcohol will enter your bloodstream more quickly. It's a good idea to eat before you have your first drink, and while you are drinking. Make sure to:

- Drink plenty of water.
- Avoid mixing alcohol with sugary or energy drinks.
- Avoid salty snacks – they will make you thirsty and likely to drink more (however, if you have a condition like POTS, eating more salty snacks may be helpful for staying hydrated, along with water and electrolytes)

4. Check your medications. Some medications, including medications for mental health conditions, can have unwanted and even dangerous effects when mixed with alcohol. If you've started taking a new medication recently, or just don't know if your medications are safe to take with alcohol, you can use a site like the [Drug Interactions Checker](#).

5. Know what you're drinking and how much you're drinking. Consider avoiding large-batch drinks like punches that may have a deceptively high alcohol content or may have other chemicals in the mix. It's easy to lose track, but counting how many drinks you've had can help avoid getting more intoxicated than you planned.

6. Trust your instincts. If you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, don't ignore those feelings. Go with your gut. Get somewhere safe and call someone you trust. If you think you have had too much to drink, ask a trusted friend to help you get home safely.

If someone offers you a drink, you can always say no.

7. Don't leave drinks unattended. That includes when you use the bathroom, go dancing, or leave to make a phone call. Either take the drink with you or throw it out. Ideally, get new drinks in new, sealed containers.

8. Only accept drinks from people you know or trust. This can be challenging in some settings, like a crowded party or festival. If you choose to accept a drink from someone you've just met, try to go with the person to the bar to order it, watch it being poured, and carry it yourself.

9. Be aware of sudden changes in the way your body feels. Do you feel more intoxicated than you are comfortable with? Some drugs are odorless, colorless and/or tasteless, and can be added to your drink without you noticing. If you feel uncomfortable, tell a friend and have them help you get to a safe place. If you suspect you or a friend has been drugged, it's important to get medical attention.

Calling 911 may not be a safe option for everyone. Consider calling a 24-hour nurse helpline to get advice about where to go. Reach out to friends who can help with transportation. If this isn't an option for you, stay with your friend to keep an eye on them in case things worsen.

10. Don't drink and drive (or scooter, or bike!). Even a small amount of alcohol in your system makes it unsafe to drive because it impairs your judgment and reflexes. Making a plan ahead of time, even if you don't plan to drink, can help you get home safely. Some alternatives to drinking and driving include:

- Deciding with your friends who will be the "designated driver"
- Planning to call a reliable friend who stayed home
- Reserving enough money for an Uber or Lyft
- Using public transport

There will always be risks associated with drinking alcohol. Sometimes our bodies react in ways we are not expecting, or we encounter situations that are unsafe or uncomfortable. While we can't eliminate these risks entirely, using safety strategies to reduce these risks can help us to have more enjoyable experiences.