

## Rethinking drinking

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Alcohol slips down so easily. Share a bottle of wine with your partner at dinner and you'll have added about 1100 kilojoules - almost a Mars Bar - on top of the food. No big deal if it happens once or twice a week but any more and the kilojoules really add up.

Australia's new alcohol guidelines to be released by the National Health and Medical Research Council in the next few weeks will reportedly confirm the 2007 draft guidelines that say if you want to keep to a low risk level of drinking, two drinks a day or less is the limit - for both men and women. So if you're consuming more, or want to shed weight, it's worth rethinking how much you drink.

Along with extra kilojoules, alcohol can be a real energy sapper and it's hard to get motivated to exercise.

If you're weary after a long day at work, don't count on a drink to perk you up. When a thirtysomething friend quit alcohol for a month recently, two things surprised her - one was that the habit was easy to break, the other was she felt more alert in the evenings and got more done.

Alcohol might be our favourite party drug but it's not the upper we think it is, says the director of the Australian Centre for Addiction Research in Sydney, associate professor Sitharthan Thiagarajan.

"As you start drinking, alcohol slows you down - yet we have this perception that if you're stressed out, it's a magic tonic," he says.

Unless you're dependent on alcohol - and most drinkers aren't - research suggests most of us can learn to drink less, says Thiagarajan.

The ACAR runs a free web-based program, Control Your Drinking Online, to help anyone wanting to cut down. Sixty per cent of people on the program are women and the typical age is mid-30s.

One of the program's aims is to get people to drink more mindfully, asking themselves "do I really need this drink?".

"I realised drinking had just become a habit - a glass of wine while I cooked dinner, another when I was eating, then I'd sit down to watch TV and have a couple more," another friend says. "Then I realised it was just something I did while I watched TV - now I'll chop up some fresh fruit and eat that instead."

For information about Control Your Drinking Online, see [acar.net.au](http://acar.net.au), or challenge yourself to make February an alcohol-free month by signing up with FebFast at [febfast.com.au](http://febfast.com.au) and help raise funds for organisations working to reduce alcohol- and drug-related harm.

*This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2009/02/04/1233423269657.html>*



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