

ask Dr Roshan Jain

Your *mental and emotional health* questions answered

Q **Is alcohol fattening? My exercise regime is futile and I seem to be putting on rather than losing weight. I drink a bit on regular basis but am not sure how much is too much!**

We frequently talk about alcohol and the perils of drinking, more so whilst drinking! Alcohol is one of the most toxic substances known to man, that is readily and legally available worldwide. Studies suggest that it is connected to more than 60 types of diseases and injuries, including liver cancer, stroke, psychiatric illnesses, suicide, motor vehicle accidents and homicide. Yet, alcohol intake is steadily on the rise, especially in India.

Drinking couple of days a week contributes to weight gain and spare tires! Let's talk about the actual calorie content. Alcohol has seven calories per gram. This makes it nearly twice as fattening as carbohydrates or protein (both contain four calories per gram) and just under the caloric value for fat (nine calories per gram). Therefore 60 ml of whisky has about 120 calories if drunk without a fizzy drink or snack to go with it.

The calories derived from alcohol are called 'empty' calories because they contain no beneficial nutrients such as vitamins and minerals.

The guidelines for drinking in healthy individuals are as follows: 21 units a week for men and 14 units for women. No more than 3 units per sitting. One unit equates to a 25 ml measure of spirit like whisky, or half a pint of ordinary strength (4 per cent) beer, 100 ml of 10 per cent wine. Therefore "large" peg of whisky has 2 units; a can of regular beer has about 1.5 units and 175 ml glass of wine contains two units.

Drink sensibly my friend, enjoy it, drink the drink and don't let it drink you! If

possible, avoid it altogether. Try to give yourself at least couple of days off alcohol every week, as this will help you avoid piling on the pounds. Additional dietary advice from a gym instructor or a dietician will be helpful for you.

Q **I have suffered from sleep disturbance for years, especially since I joined work as an IT professional. I do shift work, which is tiring and affects my social life as I am at work in the evening when I should be with family and friends. How do I improve my sleep without taking sleeping pills?**

We seem to live in a 24-hour society these days; with many doing shift work in the IT industry, catering for 'international clients'. This is badly blurring the work life boundaries. People carry work home and continue to work until they drop off to a poor night's sleep. Techies are exposed to devices that emit bright lights, which confuse human brains and sleep patterns. Alongside, we are bombarded with information overload from Internet and Social media, which contributes to our crowded mind and poor ability to relax and unwind. Our fast paced automated life allows little time for introspection and connection to things around us.

We must learn to 'wind down' and 'retire' to bed. Effectively develop skill to switch off from work, much like our computer, which would 'hang' if we don't shut it down at night.

We must actively plan and pursue sleep. Firstly, ensure adequate exposure to sunlight, besides regular exercise and activities. Slow down and connect with things around you. Establish sleep hygiene: reduce intake of stimulating food and drinks like coffee, tea, chocolates, nicotine; shower and get into fresh clothes before



bedtime; avoid late night meals and eat at least three hours before sleep; listen to relaxing music and read a book; avoid electronic media usage at night especially internet and social media; ensure that the room environment is pleasant and warm with dim lighting; try evening yoga for relaxation.

Take regular breaks and time off work, including holidays away from home, to refresh and rejuvenate. Balance work and life, and discontinue shifts if possible.

Our doctors will answer all queries on emotional and mental health. Got mind trouble of your own? Drop us a mail at bpositiveQA@apollolife.com
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