

NEW



## IS ALCOHOL A CURE FOR STRESS?

Unwinding with a pint, glass of vino or a dram can seem like an easy way to deal with stress. At first, drinking can ‘take the edge off’ as the blood alcohol content contributes to initial feelings of relaxation.

Increases in blood alcohol content can lead to temporary feelings of excitement, but feelings of depression can occur as these levels fall. Over time, regular drinking can disrupt sleep, negatively affect your thoughts and feelings, and make stress much harder to handle.



The relationship between stress and alcohol is a two-way street. Stress may tempt you to drink, and drinking more can lead to more stress.



Alcohol is a class of drug termed: a **sedative**. It is a chemical depressant that affects the central nervous system.

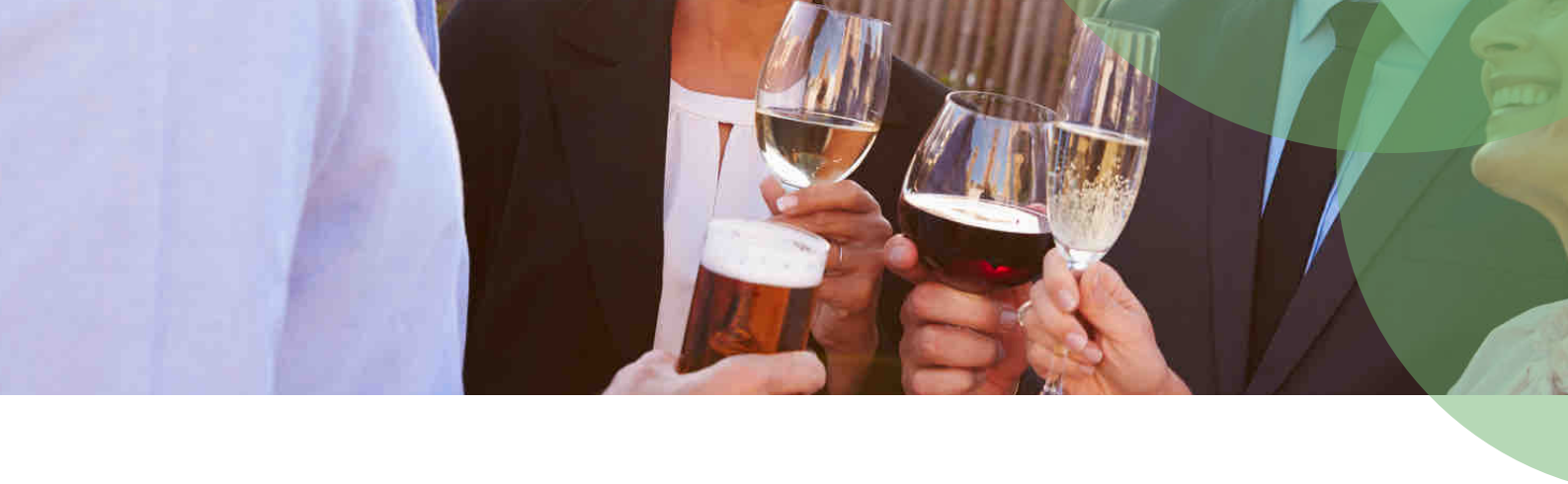
### “Alcohol helps me sleep and sleep helps me cope with stress”

While the second part of that phrase is true, alcohol does not help with sleep. Alcohol is often used as a sleep aid, but the reality is that we lose consciousness more quickly. Losing consciousness does not mean the same as falling asleep.

**Alcohol fragments sleep. And sleep is the foundation for good health and wellbeing.**



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Dr Matthew Walker, author of **'Why we sleep'**, says that your alcohol will puncture your sleep with multiple awakenings. Some you will remember the next day, and others you won't even be aware of. The bottom line is that you'll wake up feeling unrested and less able to cope with the stressors of the day ahead.

Alcohol blocks **REM** (rapid eye movement) sleep which is critical for learning, memory and emotional wellbeing (amongst other things!). Just a single glass of wine can disrupt REM sleep. **Simply put, a lack of sleep just exacerbates stress.**

We're not ones to judge your drinking habits, but arming yourself with the right information is the first step to changing your relationship with alcohol and stress.



### WANT TO CHANGE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ALCOHOL?

Drink Aware is a great resource of facts, advice and tools:  
<https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/facts/health-effects-of-alcohol/mental-health/alcohol-and-mental-health>

