Responsible drinking over the Festive Season

The Christmas season has arrived, and many of us will be thinking about enjoying the festive season with our friends and family. As we commence the season of work parties, house parties, Christmas parties and New Years Eve parties, most people will find ample invitations to drink and be merry over the next few weeks. Whilst many will reach January and look back over the season with happy memories, some will recall the adverse effects of drinking to excess - the headaches, sickness, loss of memory and embarrassing behaviour.

The Wellbeing@Work team have put together some information to help you make informed choices regarding this year's festive tipples.

**Reducing the risks - How much is too much?**

The NHS guideline advise that men should drink no more than 3-4 units of alcohol per day, and women should drink no more than 2-3 units per day. Even if you do not drink all week, you are not advised to save up your units in order to drink them all in one night. Drinking more than twice your daily limit (women = 6, men = 8) is called a 'binge'.
Top tips for drinking this Festive Season

1. Set a limit
Before you head out for the night, think about setting a limit as to how much you are going to drink and stick to it. Men are advised to drink no more than 4 units per day, and women are advised to drink no more than 3 units per day. If you want to clarify how many units are in your preferred drink, you can use the unit calculator on www.drinkaware.co.uk/tips-and-tools/drink-diary

2. Alternate between soft drinks
This will help you to pace yourself throughout the night and keep your body hydrated. If you start the night early, think about delaying drinking alcohol for the first couple of hours.

3. Eat before you drink
Drinking alcohol on an empty stomach means that alcohol is absorbed quicker into your system. Chose to eat a meal of complex carbohydrates such as bread and pasta, which take longer to digest and therefore the additional alcohol you consume will also take longer to be absorbed.

4. Avoid rounds
By joining in buying rounds, it is harder to control how much and how quickly you are drinking. You will often find that you are drinking at the fastest drinker’s pace, and end up drinking more than you would have, and you’ll spend more too!
5. **Drink plenty of water**
Before you go out, during the evening and when you get home. Alcohol acts as a diuretic and your body therefore retains less water. When this happens the body takes water from the brain and causes your head to hurt the next day.

6. **Make informed choices**
Did you know that carbonated drinks (e.g. beer & sparkling wine) are absorbed faster than non-carbonated ones? Dark coloured drinks contain ‘congeners’ caused by the distilling process and can cause the drinker a worse hangover. Mixing your drinks increases the number of different toxins your body has to deal with and will result in a worse hangover the next day. Try not to be tempted by double measures because they work out cheaper.

7. **Sleep**
Alcohol will affect the quality of our sleep and when we are tired our hangovers often feel worse. Get plenty of sleep in preparation for the party season.

*Source: Wellbeing@Work, Corporate Resources (Date)*