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## I'm doing Dry January

### A New Year detox has become an annual tradition but may prove trickier as the Covid crisis takes its toll.

Dry January is an established event on the UK calendar that saw more than four million people signing up to take a month-long alcohol break at the start of 2020.

- 5 But 2021 may bring the first decline in participation since the challenge was launched in 2013, as the coronavirus pandemic takes its toll on our good intentions. A survey of more than 2,000 people conducted by Alcohol Change UK in April found that one in five – which equates to 8.6 million adults in the UK – were drinking alcohol more frequently in lockdown.
- 10 On a positive note, 6% of pre-lockdown drinkers said they had shunned booze following the introduction of the restrictions, while one in three of those quizzed were “taking active steps to manage” their alcohol intake. As the nation faces a further tightening of the Covid rules following a let-up for Christmas, many people will once again be weighing up the pros and cons of kicking the habit.
- 15 Alcohol Change UK said that in January 2017 “88% of participants saved money, 71% slept better and 58% lost weight”. A study by researchers at University College London examined 94 moderate drinkers over the course of a month as they cut their alcohol consumption. After 30 days, the subjects’ insulin resistance improved, along with “weight, blood pressure, and cancer-related growth factors”, according to the conclusion of the
- 20 study.

“Our participants also felt a lot better, in terms of sleep and concentration. It allowed them to reset their relationship with alcohol. Six months later, the proportion of drinking at harmful levels had decreased by over 50%.”

- 25 But Ian Hamilton, a lecturer in mental health and addiction at the University of York said that those who enjoy success with Dry January do not accurately represent problem drinkers. “The millions of people who sign up to it are the millions of people who probably don’t have that great a problem with alcohol so they find it relatively easy,” he said. Haut du formulaire Bas du formulaire Hamilton added that it is inadvisable for dependent drinkers to give up alcohol abruptly, since it could result in side-effects ranging from headaches to
- 30 convulsions.

Here are some of the best advice given to participants : hiding the bottles in your house to make them harder to reach, using the money you save on alcohol to buy an unrelated treat, or taking up a new hobby.