Dry January

Dry January began in 2012 as an initiative by Alcohol Change UK, a British charity, to “ditch the hangover, reduce the waistline and save some serious money by giving up alcohol for 31 days.” Millions of people now take part in the challenge, with more Americans taking notice each year.

What are the benefits of taking part in Dry January?
There are many benefits to reducing your alcohol consumption and taking part in Dry January is a good opportunity to take a break from alcohol.

• Giving up alcohol for a month may aid weight loss and lower blood pressure.
• Dry January may promote self-awareness around drinking behaviours.
• Better sleep - We may associate a boozy drink with quickly sending us to sleep, but drinking alcohol before bed actually damages the quality of your sleep.
• More energy - With more sleep comes more energy, and without the morning-after booze headache you’re likely to feel much better in yourself.

How Alcohol Affects Mental Health:
Alcohol is sometimes used by people to manage symptoms of anxiety and depression, but excessive drinking is likely to make those symptoms worse. Alcohol can be considered as a coping mechanism for some individuals who drink to help manage stress, anxiety, depression or other mental health issues. Unfortunately, although alcohol can help us relax and give us a brief feeling of euphoria, the effects are short-lived and the long-term negative consequences of using alcohol in this way can be quite harmful:

• Overuse of alcohol can worsen the symptoms of many mental health problems. In particular, it can lead to low mood and anxiety
• As the immediate feeling of calm after drinking fades over time, we may feel worse than before
• Post-drinking hangovers can be particularly difficult, with the usual headache and nausea being accompanied by feelings of depression and/or anxiety
• Using alcohol in this way can mean that the underlying mental health issues aren’t addressed

If individuals come to rely on alcohol to manage their mental health issues, that reliance can itself become a problem. Individuals may find that their drinking starts to get in the way of other activities and puts a strain on relationships, home life and work – both things that can undermine our mental wellbeing.

Helpful Tips for taking part in Dry January

1. Make goals - This one may feel like a bit of a no-brainer, but it’s really important. Not only should you have realistic expectations for yourself, but you should also get your friends and family involved. Making goals can also mean writing them down or posting them somewhere as a physical reminder of your intentions.
2. Ask for support - By making your goals public to friends and family you also open up a channel of communication and support from them that’s invaluable.

3. Avoid triggers - Whether it’s wanting a nice glass of wine on a Friday after work or wishing for a cold beer at a baseball game, many people have particular times, locations, or situations that they associate with drinking. These are known as triggers. To cut down on drinking, it’s important for everyone to first understand what their triggers are and then avoid them.

4. Plan for urges - You’ve made a plan for Dry January, but it may not always be easy to stick to it. Plan for the inevitability of an urge to drink at some point and know which actions you’ll take to overcome it.

5. Consider drinking zero-alcohol beers, or another alternative to replace the alcohol.

Useful Links for more Information:

https://alcoholchange.org.uk/help-and-support/managing-your-drinking/dry-january
https://alcoholchange.org.uk/blog/2020/covid19-drinking-during-lockdown-headline-findings
www.carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk
www.drinkaware.co.uk
https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/understand-your-drinking/unit-calculator
www.alcoholconcern.org.uk
www.nhs.uk

More Information:

If you would like to view the Webinar on ‘Alcohol Awareness - Dry January’ is being delivered live on **Friday 5th January 2024 at 12:00pm**. Please use the following link to register for this session –

https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2174201116746806617

If you are unable to join the webinar live, a recording of the session can be accessed using the same link above after the webinar has taken place.

If you feel you may need some support, you can contact Care first. Care first is a leading provider of confidential, professional counselling, information and advice services. All employees are eligible to use Care first, our services include; telephone counselling, information services and online support. Call Care first on the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence.