

# Ways to Decline Alcohol During the Holidays Without Saying You're in Recovery

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Staying sober during the holidays can be especially challenging. The pressure to drink on social occasions, even among family and friends, can be very strong. But, for anyone in recovery from Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD), sobriety is the top priority at every seasonal celebration. Below are some ways to make saying no to alcohol at holiday events easier.

## Options for Avoiding Drinking at Holiday Events

In some situations, especially where the pressure is most intense in a group, or your triggers are constant or very strong, it can be best overall to avoid the situation entirely. Meeting friends or family may be easier to manage by suggesting a restaurant, vs. a bar. But, when getting together with coworkers or attending large social events, it's not always possible to steer the attendees to your preferred venue. In such cases, it may help to check the website menu for non-alcoholic drink options to help you prepare yourself.

## Ways to Say No to Alcohol in Any Scenario

It may feel too awkward while you're in alcohol treatment to decline all alcoholic beverages featured as part of holiday events in your social sphere. Here are some tips to help you succeed in staying sober on holiday social occasions this year:

### Make a plan.

Practice a few responses to use when people offer you drinks at holiday parties. This can help you avoid feeling put off balance by declining beverage offers while people around you are all drinking. Knowing what you will say when offered alcohol can ease the anxiety about declining to drink and help increase your confidence when you're offered alcoholic drinks.

### **Keep it simple.**

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As with so many other challenges in life, the simplest way is often the best when it comes to declining to drink socially. For example, just saying "no thanks" is often sufficient to put the question behind you for the evening. But, if you want to use a handy excuse, you might say you want to be on top of your game for something you need/want to do in the morning, etc. If the pressure becomes too difficult for you, maybe consider just leaving earlier.

### **Recommit to yourself.**

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Keep sight of why you're choosing AUD recovery. Take time to remember what you know about the benefits for you personally of not drinking. If you have some favorite inspiring affirmations or advice or other confidence and motivation boosters, read those before leaving home to help you resist the social pressures to drink that you'll encounter during the holiday event.

### **Stay conscious of your triggers.**

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Try to anticipate the kinds of situations you are most likely to encounter during holiday events that feature drinking alcohol. What individuals and activities are probably going to present you with a strong temptation to drink?

Maybe there will be old friends that you have spent a lot of time with at bars. Or, maybe drinking is a central attraction of the occasion. There may be extra pressure to participate in drinking with the group. Maybe there will be karaoke, which may seem impossible to talk yourself into doing unless you've been drinking.

Prepare yourself for such contingencies and plan the way you will handle whatever instances of pressure you may experience. Consider having someone role-play such scenarios with you to help you strengthen your responses and make them more reflexive.

### **Get backup support.**

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Consider having a trusted friend or family member with you, if possible, during the holiday activities where you're most likely to feel the greatest influence to drink. It can be very helpful to have that support.

Tell your support person that you're focused on preventing relapse and ask him or her to stay around the vicinity and provide a little casual backup if necessary. Or, if remote support is more practical, ask your person to be available by phone, text, or online to

communicate with you if needed.

## Perspective

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If you achieved your goal and didn't drink alcohol — celebrate that! Maybe you succeed in avoiding drinking. That may happen during recovery. It's sometimes not easy to throw off habits. Especially when it seems like everyone around you is enjoying cocktails. Just plan to do the things that will enable you to succeed at the *next* holiday gathering.

Take time to consider how the occasion went for you. What was working well for you in avoiding drinking? What did not work well? What happened that led you to drink? How could you improve your approach to make it easier for you to succeed in not drinking at the next event?

*For free help to avoid drinking during a holiday social occasion, call for 24-hour sobriety support at 800-662-HELP (4357).*

## Happy Holidays From Renaissance Ranch Ogden!

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We provide a safe, peaceful, and supportive outpatient alcohol treatment environment for people in recovery from AUD. We'll help you transition into your long-term relapse prevention program for support anytime you need us.

**Call Renaissance Ranch Ogden at (385) 222-3737, or contact us here on our website anytime you want to schedule an appointment for a free AUD assessment.**

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