- Drinking of alcoholic beverages

How menopause can lower your tolerance to alcohol

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If you have started to notice that your tolerance for alcohol has changed during menopause, you're not alone.



Dr Naomi Potter, menopause specialist and founder of Menopause Care, says: "It's something that women are a little bit sheepish to admit to, but it's still very common. It can present itself in a number of different ways, but most women report that their tolerance goes down." But what are the main reasons behind this shift – and what can we do to manage it over the party season?

"As we get older, especially once you start hitting your
40s, pretty much everybody's metabolism slows," says Dr Alisha Esmail,
GP and BMS-accredited menopause specialist at London Gynaecology. "So, the way your body processes any kind of input into the body changes, especially alcohol.

"Our body tends to break down the alcohol more slowly, it stays in the body for longer, therefore lots of people experience side effects such as feeling it more and experience lingering side effects of it for longer the next day." Other age-related changes, such as a natural change in body composition, can also have an effect.

"Because our metabolism slows, our body composition can change later in life and during menopause," explains Dr Esmail. "Your body naturally stores more fat than muscle as you get older, and fat doesn't absorb alcohol or store alcohol as well as muscle. In addition, the liver, which is the main organ that breaks down alcohol, gets a bit less efficient as we get older."

Drinking can also heighten anxiety and disrupt our sleep. Dr Esmail adds: "A lack of sleep will make you feel rubbish in itself, but especially if you've already got all the mood changes and anxiety that may come with menopause anyway, as it will make that a bit worse." Here are some tips on how to manage these effects during the party season and beyond...

BE HONEST

"It's a case of being sensible and honest with yourself about how much you are drinking," says Dr Esmail. "We all naturally want to see the best in ourselves, so we are not always honest with ourselves in terms of how regularly and how much we're drinking."

TAKING BREAKS

"Consider taking breaks and having dry spells to see how you feel, as it can help give your body a bit of a break," recommends Dr Esmail.

STAY HYDRATED

“Stay hydrated because alcohol is a diuretic, and one of the reasons you feel so rubbish the day after drinking is because you’re so dehydrated,” says Dr Esmail. “Maybe think about having some electrolytes too.”

TRY THE ZEBRA STRIPING METHOD

“If you’re going to drink, try to have a big glass of water after every alcoholic drink or try alternating alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic drinks,” suggests
Dr Potter.

EATING ISN’T CHEATING

“Make sure that you don’t drink on an empty stomach and that you have a proper nutrient-rich meal before you start drinking,” recommends Dr Potter.

TRY NON-ALCOHOLIC OPTIONS

“There are some amazing non-alcoholic drinks on the market now that make you feel like you’re having a celebratory drink,” says Dr Potter.