- Drinking of alcoholic beverages / Weight loss

WHY DOES DRINKING ALCOHOL MAKE IT SO MUCH HARDER TO LOSE WEIGHT?

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While enjoying the occasional glass of wine or pint of beer may seem harmless, regular or excessive alcohol consumption can significantly hinder your weight-loss journey for a few reasons:

1. CALORIES

Unfortunately, alcohol is quite calorie-dense, providing seven calories per gram. That's almost as much as fat, which has nine calories per gram. A single glass of wine or a pint of beer can contain 150–250 calories and cocktails are often the worst culprit due to sugary mixers and syrups. Calories from alcohol are often referred to as 'empty calories' because they provide little to no nutritional value. For example, the average pint of beer contains about the same number of calories as a Mars bar, and a small glass of wine is equivalent to three or four Jaffa cakes. So, if you're consuming these alongside meals, it's easy to exceed your daily calorie needs without realising it.

2. FAT STORAGE

When you drink alcohol, your body treats it as a priority for your metabolism because alcohol can't be stored and must be processed immediately. As a result, the metabolism of other energy sources, like fats and carbohydrates, is temporarily paused. This shift means that the calories from the food you eat are more likely to be stored as fat, particularly if alcohol is paired with caloriedense meals or snacks.

3. FOOD CHOICES

That late-night snack or takeaway often becomes harder to resist after a few drinks. Alcohol also stimulates appetite-regulating hormones, which can lead to overeating, especially of calorie-dense, less nutritious foods.

4. SLEEP

Sleep plays a crucial role in weight loss, and alcohol is notorious for disrupting sleep patterns and interfering with the REM (rapid eye movement) cycle. Poor sleep affects hormones such as leptin and ghrelin, which regulate hunger and satiety, potentially leading to increased appetite the next day.

5. HIDDEN INGREDIENTS

Many alcoholic beverages, especially cocktails, contain added sugars and syrups that can further increase calorie intake.

So, can you enjoy a drink on a diet? Like anything, moderation is key. Try sticking to occasional consumption, such as only choosing to drink if it's a special occasion or non-consecutive days. Think of alcohol as a treat, much like dessert – it's fine in moderation, but you wouldn't necessarily have it with every meal.

It's also worth opting for lower-calorie options, such as light beers. Spirits such as vodka, gin or tequila mixed with soda water and a wedge of lime are also lighter on calories. You can also focus on high-protein, low-fat foods to stay full without overloading on calories. Additionally, drinking a generous amount of water alongside alcohol can slow down your consumption, possibly making you drink less overall.

Achieving your health goals doesn't mean giving up life's pleasures entirely – it's about finding the right balance for you. The key is to approach alcohol with mindfulness and a sense of balance.