

Get back on that wagon

All those good intentions, but somehow your alcohol intake has crept up again. Take heart. Here are some practical suggestions from psychologists and addiction specialists.

● Go easy on yourself. We beat ourselves up because we're not being as abstinent as we'd like. That dents our confidence and lack of confidence leads to drinking.

● Try cutting back gradually and keep on congratulating yourself – if you meant to cut from four glasses a night to two but end up drinking three, regard it as a success, not a failure.

● Remind yourself of the benefits of cutting down; for example, a pub-size glass of wine contains nearly the same number of calories as a Mars bar, and the money saved on booze could

buy you new shoes every month.

● Change your routine. If the first thing you do is head for the wine cupboard when you get home, have a glass of water first instead. Replace habits that make you feel bad about yourself (eg, drinking) with habits that make you feel good about yourself (eg, going to the gym, or even having a go on Wii Fit).

● Practical ploys work, such as alternating every glass of wine with a glass of water, or taking small sips. Keep doing them until they become habit.

Simon Crompton

Sources: Dr Michael Sinclair, counselling psychologist (www.mspsychology.co.uk), and Robert Patton, addiction specialist at the Institute of Psychiatry, London (www.iop.kcl.ac.uk)