

## Dry January: Are You In?

As the holidays end, some people give up alcohol in what's known as "Dry January." The monthlong wellness challenge can serve as a reset after overindulging during the holidays or as an opportunity to reassess one's relationship with alcohol. While a month of sobriety can seem overwhelming to some, it can provide multiple advantages.

Alcohol can also contribute to various health conditions, such as high blood pressure, kidney or liver problems, heart disease and certain cancers. Furthermore, a study published in JAMA Network Open reported that alcohol consumption is a leading preventable cause of death in the United States. As such, a period of sobriety can positively affect one's well-being and overall health.

One out of 4 Americans completed Dry January in 2024, according to a CivicScience tracking poll.

People may experience health-related benefits when taking a brief break from moderate to heavy alcohol consumption. Dry January participants often report sleeping better, having higher energy levels, being in a better mood and feeling more focused. Some also experience weight loss and clearer skin.

## Tips for a Successful Dry January

The goal of Dry January is to consciously drink less, even if you don't give up alcohol fully. Consider these tips for a successful month without alcohol:

- Think about potential challenges during the month, such as social events or stress triggers, so you can plan how you'll handle these situations without alcohol.
- Stay busy and engage in activities that don't involve drinking. You may discover a new hobby, exercise more or spend quality time with others in alcohol-free settings.
- Stock up on nonalcoholic beverages that you enjoy. Many great options include sparkling water, functional sodas, mocktails, and nonalcoholic beers and wines.
- Let friends and family know about your goal so they can offer support or even join you.
- Pay attention to the positive health and mental changes you notice, as they can reinforce your commitment.

Participating in Dry January can be a great way to start the new year on a healthy note. If you have any questions or concerns about your alcohol consumption, talk to a health care professional.

# Protect Your Skin During the Winter

The changing of the seasons can impact your skin. Specifically, winter weather brings colder and less humid conditions, leaving your skin prone to issues such as dryness. Dry skin symptoms can include itchiness, flakiness, redness, cracking and bleeding. Dry skin may not seem like the most concerning health problem, but not treating dry skin can result in itchiness, cracked or painful skin, eczema and dermatitis.

The following tips can help care for your skin during the winter months:

- **Adjust your shower routine.** The length and temperature of your showers can make a big difference in the dryness of your skin. Long and hot showers during the cold months can strip the natural oils in your skin, drying it out. Try short and cold showers instead.
- **Use moisturizer.** Applying moisturizer, especially after showering, can help keep your skin hydrated and prevent dryness.
- **Avoid products with fragrances.** Often, the better a product smells, the more irritating it can be for your skin. As such, consider choosing fragrance-free skin products and laundry detergents.
- **Use a humidifier.** Humidifiers can return moisture to the air in your home, helping prevent and relieve environmental dryness.
- **Stay hydrated.** Make sure you're drinking enough water throughout the day to improve the appearance of your skin and make it less susceptible to drying out.

Contact your doctor if you have any skin concerns.

# January Is National Blood Donor Month

Winter is one of the most difficult times of the year to collect enough blood products and donations to meet patient needs. That's why National Blood Donor Month is celebrated every January.

Someone in the United States needs blood or platelets every two seconds, according to the American Red Cross.

It's vital to have plenty of blood banked to meet the demand. Blood is needed for surgeries, traumatic injuries, cancer treatment and chronic illnesses. On a daily basis, roughly 29,000 units of red blood cells, 5,000 units of platelets and 6,500 units of plasma are required. Blood and platelets cannot be made synthetically, so voluntary donations are necessary. Consider the following health benefits of donating blood regularly:

- **Health problem detection**—Donated blood is tested to determine if there are any irregularities. You must also undergo a quick health screening before giving blood.
- **Heart disease risk reduction**—Donating can help eliminate any excess buildup of iron in the blood, which can lower blood pressure and the risk of a heart attack.
- **Caloric burn**—The blood donation process typically burns up to 650 calories.

Before you roll up your sleeve and commit to being a regular blood donor, check if you meet the American Red Cross' [requirements](#) to donate blood safely.

# Recipe of the Month

## Beef and Cabbage

Makes: 4 servings

### Ingredients

- 1 green cabbage head (washed and cut into bite-sized pieces)
- 1 medium onion (chopped)
- 1 lb. 90% lean ground beef
- 2 sprays of nonstick cooking spray
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- Salt (to taste, optional)
- Red pepper flakes (to taste, optional)

### Preparations

1. Chop the cabbage and onion; set them aside.
2. In a large skillet, cook the ground beef on medium heat until browned. Drain the fat. Set the beef aside.
3. Spray the skillet with nonstick cooking spray. Cook the chopped onion on medium heat until soft.
4. Add the cabbage to the chopped onion and cook until the cabbage starts to brown.
5. Stir the beef into the cabbage and onion mixture.
6. Season with garlic powder, black pepper and salt (optional). Add red pepper flakes (optional) to the cabbage if you like it spicy.

### Nutritional Information

(per serving)

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Total calories	248
Total fat	10 g
Protein	25 g
Sodium	107 mg
Carbohydrate	16 g
Dietary fiber	6 g
Saturated fat	4 g
Total sugars	8 g

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Source: MyPlate