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# Smartphone App Could Help People in Recovery Cut Down on Drinking

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A smartphone app may help people in recovery from alcohol abuse to cut down on "risky drinking"—having more than three or four alcoholic drinks in a two-hour period, a new study finds.

Using the app also increased the chance that people recovering from alcohol abuse would totally abstain from drinking, Reuters reports.

The app has guided relaxation techniques. It sends an alert when a person is near a bar or other place that could be risky to their recovery. The app includes a "panic" button that connects with a person's supporters and other app users, and has games to help distract from cravings.

Only one in four people recovering from alcohol abuse abstains from drinking in the first year of recovery, according to study author David Gustafson of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He reported his findings in *JAMA Psychiatry.*

The study included 349 adults leaving rehabilitation centers for alcoholism. One group received normal post-rehabilitation treatment, while the other group received normal treatment plus a smartphone with the app, called the Addiction-Comprehensive Health Enhancement Support System (A-CHESS). They were able to use the app for eight months.

The researchers asked participants to report how many days within the past month they engaged in risky drinking. After one year, participants who didn't use the app reported an average of three days of risky drinking in the past month, compared with about one day for those who had the app.

About 52 percent of those who had the app didn't drink at all one year later, compared with 40 percent of those who didn't have the app. According to Gustafson, the app is being used by more than a dozen treatment agencies, as well as the Department of Veterans Affairs.