Fresher’s week is remembered (or not) for its crazy nights out, meeting new people, discovering new places, and generally having an amazing time. However, going out in a new, unfamiliar city can be daunting for many people, especially those who have maybe grown up in quieter areas. Not everyone needs alcohol to have a good time, but for those who do enjoy the odd drink, or are starting drinking for the first time, here are AVS’s top tips for staying safe and alcohol aware during fresher’s week (and the 5 years after).

1) Eating is cheating…or not
Before a night out it’s always a good idea to eat a decent meal, with plenty of carbs, to ‘line your stomach’. Far from stopping you getting drunk, this just means that you’re more likely to last longer on the night out, and less likely to throw up in a taxi on your way to the club.

2) Don’t mix your drinks
Drinking wine, vodka, beer and whiskey all at the same pre drinks may seem like a good idea at the time, but you will pay for it in the morning! Much better to just stick to the same kind of alcohol through the night.

3) Know your limits
This may seem like a complete kill joy, but keeping a tabs on your alcohol consumption, and sticking to your limits will result in a much better night in the long run. No one likes looking after the overly drunk friend who keeps falling over, and throwing up in a club toilet is certainly an experience you’ll
want to avoid! And if you find yourself feeling out of control, there’s nothing wrong with staying hydrated and asking for an occasional glass of water from the bar.

4) **The more the merrier**

Make sure you always go out in groups, and stay relatively close to your friends. Keeping track of drunk friends on a night out can be like herding cats, but where possible try to keep together, and when leaving clubs try to make sure no one is left behind. Make sure you have your friends’ phone numbers before setting off, so if anything goes wrong you can easily give them a ring and re-group.

5) **On your own**

If you find yourself on your own on a night out, don’t panic! Stay where other students are i.e. inside/ just outside a club, and don’t go wandering off down any dark streets alone. Before heading out make sure you have the number of a reputable taxi company in your phone, so if you can’t find anyone then you can still get yourself home - much better than just jumping in the first taxi to stop in front of you (beside being safer, booked taxis tend to be quite a bit cheaper!)

6) **Thieves**

Nothing ruins a good night like having your phone nicked, and unfortunately this can be a relatively common occurrence in some cities. Always keep your bag close to you, and avoid getting your phone out too often. Use bags which are more difficult for thieves to open (i.e. zip rather than poppers to close), preferably which go over the shoulder and have short straps, so the bag rests close under your arm - the closer your bag is to your body the more noticeable it will be if someone is opening it. Make sure your phone has a password to access it so thieves can’t make calls from it, and if your phone has a tracking device or anti phone theft software then make sure this is enabled. If your phone is stolen it’s important to remain calm - as soon as possible report your stolen phone to your network operator and have your number disabled. Don’t be afraid to tell your parents - they may seem mad at the time, but they can often provide good advice and get things going a lot quicker.

7) **Unattended Drinks**

Sadly, in clubs where drinks are left alone it is far too easy for someone to slip something in. If you’re holding your drink, and keeping an eye on its contents, this is much more difficult. If someone you don’t know offers to buy you a drink, either politely decline, or accompany them to the bar, just to make sure your drink isn’t tampered with.
8) Getting home

It’s easy to spend all your money on shots, or just one more drink on a night out, but try to save a tenner as emergency money for the taxi. If you know you’re bad for spending, keep your emergency money in a different part of your bag or purse, so you won’t be tempted to spend it. It’s no fun having to do a mad dash to a cash point after leaving a club, especially in the freezing winter so plan ahead!

9) Hangovers

These are totally unavoidable, and the more you drink, and the older you get, the worse they will become. However, there are some tips for trying to cheat a hangover. Make sure you always have something to eat when you come in from a night out, whether cheesy chips or a couple of slices of toast. Try to drink several pints of water too, as the main effects of a hangover are caused by dehydration, and keep a glass of water by your bed in case you wake up in the night with a dry mouth. Also apparently bananas are a great hangover cure - give it a try and find out.

10) Go alcohol free

Not every night out has to involve alcohol, and you’ll find that your university holds plenty of non-alcoholic events, which are great for meeting new people that you’ll still remember in the morning!

Stay safe and enjoy your nights out!