# Denise Asks Awkward Questions – Wine before bed

**Denise:** Hello everybody, I'm comedian Denise Scott, and welcome to Denise asks Awkward Questions with Jean Hailes. My guest today is the CEO of the Sleep Health Foundation, Dr. Moira Junge. She is a guru for all the people out there, including me, who toss and turn at night. So without further ado, let's get awkward.

Okay, Moira, there's a few questions here for the night owls among us. First up a question from Betina in Port Augusta, South Australia. Betina writes, "I struggle sleeping, so I try to drink a couple of glasses of wine before I go to bed, but it only seems to work for a few hours. Should I take some pills instead?"

**Moira:** Betina, I think this is a really good question, and she's not alone with having alcohol to help her with her sleep. But the whole thing here is that it's just before bed and it's actually using it as a sleep aid. And it breaks my heart because ironically, it's the worst thing for sleep. Yes, it'll get you asleep because it's a sedative. But gee, it's actually, when it's close to sleep time, it's really poor. Like, you know, there's more sleep... we call sleep fragmentation, which means you should wake up more. There's less of the quality sleep, like less deep sleep, less REM sleep. You feel pretty shocking the next day, less alert, less able to focus.

So that's just the short term stuff. But the long term things is, is really the risk to your health. Because the thing about the two glasses too is that you probably need, sometimes, like in a month, you might need three, four to have the same effect. So that you build up that tolerance and you need to have more and more of a higher dose to get the same effect. People I've seen sometimes have drank, you know, up to a bottle or two just for sleep. So not to be a Wowser, like I think the important thing is that, you know, not to say don't drink at all, but don't match up your drinking with your sleeping, because it's a bit like drinking and driving, like they don't, they don't match. That's a really poor strategy.

So the sleeping pills would be a better option. And a safer option. Getting sleeping pills is a hard thing these days. Doctors are really strict on that, which is from my point of view, a good thing. But it's come at a time though that people don't know what else to do sometimes. They think I'm desperate for sleep... and the alcohol sort of, you know, it's, yeah, it's accessible. It's cheap.

I think Bettina needs to be really aware though that she's not alone. I would love, and I'm really confident, that Bettina would be able to have a healthier, more sustainable approach to sleeping better. Perhaps sometimes people wouldn't even need a sleep or like a health professional right now. The first thing to do would be just have a couple of nights off without it. See what happens. Take a week without alcohol, get some confidence. Sign up to a Feb fast or something else one year. See how you go and you actually see the difference.

The thing is people, when they stop using alcohol, they sleep so much better. Even though , ironically, they think, "Oh, I won't be able to sleep." Denise Asks Awkward Questions - You're better off with the sleep deprivation than the risk of what the alcohol will do.

**Denise:** All right. That's it for today. If I'm not here and you have more questions, go to jeanhailes.org au.

Bye everybody.

Information about Jean Hailes for Women’s Health

Jean Hailes for Women's Health is a national not-for-profit organisation dedicated to improving the health of all women, girls and gender-diverse people. For free, evidence-based and easy-to-understand health information, visit [www.jeanhailes.org.au](http://www.jeanhailes.org.au).

© 2023 Jean Hailes Foundation. All rights reserved. This publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part by any means without written permission of the copyright owner. Contact: [licensing@jeanhailes.org.au](mailto:licensing@jeanhailes.org.au)