REDCURING HARM FROM ALCOHOL

Low risk drinking is considered to be:

- 2 standard drinks per day for men and women
- No more than 4 standard drinks on a single drinking occasion
- Have at least two alcohol-free days per week

Other ways to reduce harm:

- Arrange transport to return home after drinking.
- Never drink and drive
- Eat a good meal prior to drinking
- Drink non-alcoholic drinks in between alcoholic drinks such as soft drinks, water or juice
- Sip slowly rather than drink fast
- Finish your glass before getting a top up so you can keep track of how much you drink
- Try to stay with people you trust when drinking
- Always carry condoms and lube if there is any chance you may have sex

WHAT IF YOUR FRIEND PASSES OUT?

- If the person is unconscious, check their airway is clear, place them on their side and into the recovery position
- Call an ambulance on 000 and stay with them
- If breathing has stopped and there is no pulse, start applying CPR if you are trained

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

Emergency 000
DirectLine 1800 888 236
Drug Info 1300 858 584
North and West Metro Alcohol and Other Drug Service Intake Ph 1800 700 514
Suicide Helpline 1300 651 251
Family Drug Help 1300 660 068
Alcoholics Anonymous 1300 222 222
North West Mental Health Triage 1300 874 243

© Substance Use and Mental Illness Treatment Team (SUMITT) 2015.
Information contained in this pamphlet is offered for general purposes and should not be considered as substitute advice from your mental health treating team, drug and alcohol worker or GP.
**ALCOHOL AND YOUR MENTAL HEALTH**

**What is Alcohol?**
Alcohol is a beverage produced by a process of fermentation of water, yeast, sugar and various grains, fruits or vegetables.

**Standard Drinks**
A standard drink varies greatly between countries. In Australia a standard drink contains 10 grams of pure alcohol.

Examples of one standard drink are:
- Low alcohol beer (3.5%) 375 ml (one stubby)
- Regular beer (4.9%) 285ml
- Table wine (12%) 100ml
- Spirits (40%) 30ml

It takes your liver about an hour to break down one standard drink.

**Alcohol and your mental health**
- Drinking alcohol increases the likelihood and severity of mood swings. Alcohol can cause depression and anxiety.
- Symptoms of depression and anxiety may seem to reduce with the first few drinks, but are likely to become worse if you continue to drink.
- Drinking alcohol increases your risk of other problems, such as unwanted or unsafe sex, assault and problems with the law.
- If you have a history of psychosis and consume alcohol you may become more confused and disorganised, and you are more likely to hear or see things that are not happening.

**Prolonged drinking can lead to:**
- Problems in your relationships
- Depression & suicidal thoughts
- Aggression and violence
- Health issues, such as liver & stomach problems
- Paranoia
- Loss of confidence

**Alcohol and pregnancy**
Alcohol crosses the placenta to the baby and can cause problems such as miscarriage, premature birth and abnormalities in your baby, known as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. There is no safe level of drinking alcohol during pregnancy.

**What happens when you stop using Alcohol?**
Withdrawal from alcohol can be life threatening. If you have been using alcohol regularly you may experience withdrawal symptoms as soon as 12 hours after you last drink. Seizures can occur within 24 to 72 hours.

**Physical withdrawal lasts 3 – 5 days and involves:**
- Loss of appetite and nausea
- Increased anxiety
- Sleep problems
- Sweating
- Irritability
- Confusion
- Tremors or shaking
- Feeling like there are bugs on your skin

It is important to withdraw from alcohol under medical supervision, especially if you have been drinking heavily.

*“Changes are not easy but they’re possible and sometimes necessary” - SUMITT Consumer Consultant.*

**Alcohol and other drugs**
Alcohol in combination with any other drug can be dangerous. The effects of the drugs may be increased or unpredictable, and may make you ill.

Taking alcohol with benzodiazepines (e.g. Valium) or opiates (e.g. heroin or methadone) can increase the risk of overdose or even death. Alcohol on its own can cause death if drunk in very high doses.

Alcohol can also interfere with the effectiveness of some medication. Tell your doctor about your alcohol use.