

REDUCING 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

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ALCOHOL

**AND
YOUR
MENTAL
HEALTH**

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SUBSTANCE USE & MENTAL
ILLNESS TREATMENT TEAM

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.

HOW DOES ALCOHOL AFFECT YOU?

- Alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream through the stomach and the small intestine
- The effects will depend on things like how much you drink, how quickly you drink, your age, weight and gender
- Consuming alcohol may cause you to do things you would not do when sober
- The immediate effects include feeling relaxed, more confident, and sometimes happier
- Other effects include reduced concentration, slower reflexes, less inhibitions, poor coordination, intense mood swings, confusion, nausea, vomiting and sleepiness

- In some doses, alcohol can cause brain damage, coma and death
- Some of the long-term effects of heavy alcohol abuse include damage to the brain, liver, kidneys and stomach

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.

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.