

Alcohol

Ways to reduce harms



Firstly, a few key things to know about alcohol...

- Alcohol can make you feel happy and relaxed, however if you have anxiety or depression, over time regular or heavy drinking can make these things feel worse.
- Whilst alcohol can help you fall asleep more easily, it often stops you from getting deep, uninterrupted sleep.
- Alcohol interferes with the absorption of vitamin B1 (thiamine), which your brain needs to function properly. If you drink regularly, consider taking a vitamin B1 supplement every day.
- Mixing alcohol with other depressants such as opioids or benzodiazepines (e.g. Valium®) can be risky and increases your risk of overdose.

It's important to know that there is no safe level of alcohol use.

| Would you try any of these strategies below? (or maybe you do them already?) | Yes | Maybe | No |
|--|-----|-------|----|
| Setting limits on how much you will drink each day/week/month? | | | |
| Delaying your first drink until after you have finished certain jobs/tasks/activities or at a certain time of the day? | | | |
| Setting a limit on how many drinks you will have before you start drinking? | | | |
| Choosing drinks with lower alcohol content (e.g. mid-strength beer)? | | | |
| Alternating each alcoholic drink with a non-alcoholic drink? | | | |
| Eating healthy foods such as fruit, vegetables, protein-rich foods like meat and eggs, soups, yoghurt, smoothies etc? | | | |
| Eating a meal before (and during) drinking? | | | |
| Taking a vitamin B1 supplement every day? | | | |
| If you're heading out, making sure your phone is charged and has credit? | | | |
| Not getting into buying rounds? | | | |
| Not mixing alcohol with other depressants such as benzodiazepines or opioids? | | | |
| When drinking, having someone around (or someone you could quickly contact) if you find yourself in trouble who is able to get help in an emergency? | | | |
| Having a meal ready at home to eat before you go to bed? | | | |
| If you have alcohol at home, storing it safely out of reach of children? | | | |
| Having 2 alcohol-free days per week? <i>NB: unless physically dependent on alcohol – see warning on next page</i> | | | |
| Having a break for 2 weeks or more semi-regularly? <i>NB: again, unless physically dependent on alcohol - see warning on next page</i> | | | |



Alcohol and driving

Alcohol can reduce your ability to drive safely. Open licence holders must have a BAC lower than 0.05 to drive legally.

It's also difficult to know how much your driving has been affected or how long alcohol remains in your system. Fatigue, hangovers or come-downs can also affect your driving skills. If in doubt, do not drive (and this includes scooting/cycling).

Consider purchasing a mini home breath-testing device to help work out if you are over-the-limit before you drive (noting, these may not always be 100% accurate).



Accidents

Try to prevent accidents or bad experiences from occurring. Avoid high-risk situations when under the influence (e.g. around traffic, waterways, heavy machinery) or places where an overdose or accident may go unnoticed.



Do you use regular medications?

Sometimes alcohol can affect how these medicines work. Check the medicine packet and/or ask your doctor.



Practice safe sex

Carry and use condoms and access regular STI testing, especially whenever you start having sex with a new partner.

WARNING



If you are a heavy daily drinker, we recommend you seek medical advice before stopping or cutting back to avoid severe and/or dangerous withdrawal.

Withdrawal is different for everybody and can last up to 10 days. Common symptoms include nausea, vomiting, stomach upset, headache, sleeplessness, sweating, and shaking. Severe alcohol withdrawal can cause hallucinations and seizures - this requires urgent medical attention.

Are you pregnant, breastfeeding or parenting?

Using any substance when planning a pregnancy, pregnant, or while breastfeeding can affect your baby's body and brain development. Talk to a medical professional for advice, especially if considering detoxing whilst pregnant.

Substance use can affect your children and others around you. Ensure your children remain safe and supervised at all times. Make a plan prior to drinking and be prepared for the hangover in advance.

Note: Sleeping with a child in the same bed while under the influence of alcohol can be particularly dangerous.

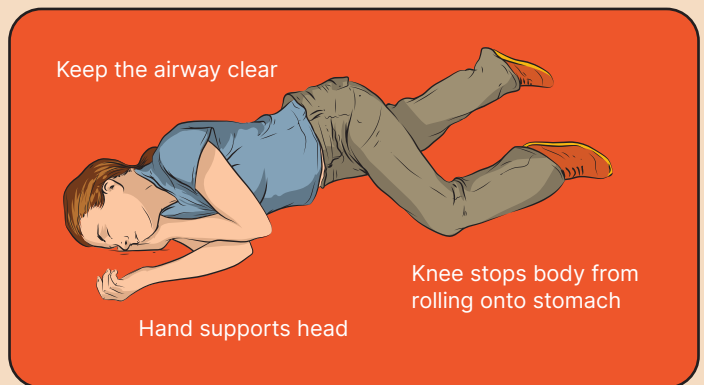
Responding to an alcohol overdose

Signs of an alcohol overdose include:

- Cannot be woken up
- Very slow breathing, choking, snoring or gurgling
- Blue lips, skin or fingertips
- Very low body temperature
- Vomiting, especially while unconscious
- Extreme confusion/agitation
- Hallucinations
- Seizures

If this occurs, seek assistance by calling triple zero (000) and ask for 'AMBULANCE'. If someone is unconscious and breathing, turn them on their side in the recovery position. If they are not breathing, perform CPR if you are able to and wait with them until help arrives. Don't confuse sleep with loss of consciousness. If someone cannot be woken up, it is likely they are unconscious.

Unfortunately, there's no way to reverse an alcohol overdose. The effects have to wear off over time.



What would be signs that your alcohol use is becoming more of a problem? When would you know it's time to take a break and/or seek help?

