



Mental health and wellbeing – Alcohol and other drugs

Information for people experiencing alcohol and other drugs (AOD) issues COVID-19

The coronavirus (COVID-19) has caused sudden changes in our lives. This has been a difficult time for many, with greater levels of isolation, stress and uncertainty. This type of distress increases the chance that some of us will begin or increase the use of alcohol or other drugs to cope. The use of alcohol and drugs, however, can have a negative impact on mental health, physical health and brain health.

This factsheet provides details of how to access support and offers strategies to help you manage substance use while coping with challenges of COVID-19.

Wellbeing strategies

Improving your wellbeing without alcohol

Alcohol can temporarily make you feel relaxed or good, however alcohol can be addictive and drinking a lot in a short time, or on regular basis, is likely to cause problems for your physical, emotional and social health. Like any other toxic substance, alcohol should be treated with caution.

In Australia, as in many cultures, alcohol is associated with social activity. In this time of crisis many people are, or may be tempted to, hoard alcohol to 'get through'. Hoarding and using alcohol as an emotional crutch will not help you through this difficult time. Knowing how to make your own fun and look after yourself will!

Looking after yourself

There are a few simple pieces of advice you can follow to look after your mental and physical health during this time:

- **Stay connected** – Keep in touch by phone, social media or video calls.
- **Keep moving** – Exercise to relieve stress (check to see if your regular gym, yoga studio or exercise outlet is holding online classes or check out YouTube or Vimeo for classes).
- **Stick to a routine** – Keep regular sleeping and eating patterns (consider using sleep apps to keep track of your sleep routine).
- **Switch off** – Take a break from the news if it feels overwhelming
- **Reach out** – Activate your support network or reach out for professional help.

Know your limits

To reduce the risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury follow the recommendations outlined in the [Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol](#):

- **Healthy men and women** – no more than 10 standard drinks per week and no more than 4 standard drinks on any one day.
- **Pregnant women, breastfeeding or planning a pregnancy** – not drinking alcohol is safest option for their baby.
- **Children and young people** under 18 years of age - no alcohol.

The less you choose to drink, the lower your risk of alcohol-related harm. For some people not drinking at all is the safest option.



Managing your use of alcohol and other drugs

Unsure if you're drinking too much? Try Your Room's online confidential [risk assessment tool](#) to determine if your drinking is putting your physical and mental health at risk.

To track and reduce your alcohol use, download the NSW Health [Drinks Meter app](#). The app is a useful tool in managing your alcohol consumption in times of stress and anxiety.

The [Get Healthy Service Alcohol Reduction Program](#) is available for people who want to reduce their alcohol consumption to achieve and maintain a healthy weight and a healthier lifestyle.

For information and harm reduction advice regarding [alcohol](#) and drug use, go to ACON's factsheets at [ACON helping to reduce COVID-19 drug and alcohol harm](#).

For information on protecting your health while using drugs during the COVID-19 pandemic, go to NSW Users and AIDS Association (NUAA)'s factsheet on [COVID-19 and Harm Reduction](#).

Local supports

[MPHN Central Access and Navigation Service](#) 1800 931 603 (Monday to Friday 9am-5pm).

NB: This is not a crisis service.

[Murrumbidgee AccessLine](#) 1800 800 944.

Online and phone supports

Australian Government's Head to Health www.headtohealth.gov.au/covid-19-support

LifeLine: 13 11 14 (24 hours/7 days); text: 0477 13-11-14 (6pm-midnight AEDT, 7 nights); chat online: www.lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat

(7pm - midnight, 7 nights) or visit www.lifeline.org.au

Beyond Blue COVID-19 support line: 1800 512 348; or visit www.beyondblue.org.au

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS): 1800 250 015 (24 hours/7 days); or via WebChat: <https://yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au/getting-help/Pages/adis.aspx>

(Monday to Friday 8.30am-5pm).

Family Drug Support (FDS): 1300 368 186 (24 hours/7 days); or online: www.fds.org.au/

Alcohol and Drug Foundation's Drug Info line: 1300 85 85 84; or: www.adf.org.au

[Stimulant Treatment Line](#): (02) 9361 8088 (Syd); 1800 101 188 (NSW).

[Opioid Treatment Line](#): 1800 642 428.

[SMART Recovery](#): <https://smartrecoveryaustralia.com.au>

[Narcotics Anonymous \(NA\)](#): 1300 652 820.

[Alcoholics Anonymous \(AA\)](#): 1300 222 222.

[Turning Point Counselling Online](#): 1800 422 599 (Regional NSW); (02) 9361 8000 (Metropolitan).

[Hello Sunday Morning Daybreak Program](#): <https://www.hellosundaymorning.org/daybreak>

Where to get reliable information

Reliable resources and to up to date with what is happening with COVID-19:

- call the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080
- visit the NSW Health COVID-19 website: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/covid-19-latest.aspx>

Source acknowledgement:

Your Room: <https://yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au>

Network of Alcohol and Other Drugs Agencies (NADA): www.nada.org.au

NSW Health: www.health.nsw.gov.au

Australian Psychological Society:

www.psychology.org.au