

Alcohol and other drugs tip sheet

About alcohol and other drug use?

Many people use alcohol or other drugs to relax, socialise or cope with difficult feelings. For some people, use can start to affect health, mood, sleep, relationships, work or study over time. Australia's alcohol guidelines suggest that healthy adults drinking no more than 10 standard drinks a week and no more than 4 on any one day lowers the risk of harm, and that less alcohol means lower risk. Thinking about change can feel hard, and support is available.

Common signs

Some people notice signs that their use may be affecting them, such as:

- Using more, or more often, than you intended
- Finding it hard to cut down
- Using to cope with stress or emotions
- Problems at home, work or study
- Low mood, anxiety or poor sleep
- Taking risks while using
- Others worrying about your use
- Feeling unwell when you stop

Things that may help

Some people thinking about cutting down or stopping find these ideas helpful. For anyone who has been using heavily, a conversation with a GP before stopping can be a helpful first step, as stopping suddenly is not always safe.

Reflect on your reasons

Some people find it helpful to write down what a change might bring and what matters most to them.

Consider your goals

Some people choose goals such as alcohol free days or a weekly limit, and keep track of how they go.

Notice your triggers

It may help to notice the people, places, feelings and times of day linked to using, and think about ways to manage them.

Other ways to cope

Many people find exercise, time outdoors, relaxation, hobbies and connecting with others helpful with stress and cravings.

Support around you

Some people find it helps to share their goals with people they trust and spend time with people who support the change.

Setbacks are common

Slip ups are a common part of change. Many people find it helpful to see them as a chance to learn rather than a reason to give up.

Things that **may help** (continued)

Every bit less counts

With alcohol, less drinking means lower risk of harm. Cutting down can be a worthwhile step for people who are not ready to stop.

Mental health matters too

Alcohol and drugs may numb painful feelings for a while, but can get in the way of feeling better. For people using to cope with stress, low mood or trauma, talking with a GP or psychologist may help.

When to get **more support**

If things are becoming unmanageable and affecting your social, family, work or study life, you may want to see your GP or a psychologist. You do not need to wait until things feel serious to reach out.

A GP can be a good place to start. They can talk with you about your health, options for cutting down or stopping, and counselling or treatment services. Alcohol and drug counselling is also available by phone and online.

Benefits of **seeking support**

- Talking with a GP or psychologist may help you make sense of what is happening.
- Support might help you feel less alone with what you are going through.
- A psychologist could offer new ways of coping that suit you.
- Talking things through might help you explore your options for change, at your own pace.

Need help **right now?**

If you or someone else is in danger or thinking about suicide, please reach out now.

000

Emergency services, if life is in danger

13 11 14

Lifeline crisis support, 24 hours, 7 days

13 92 76

13YARN, run by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 24/7

Trusted **Australian resources**

Counselling Online (Turning Point), 24/7 counsellingonline.org.au

ACT Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS), 24 hours (02) 6207 9977

Alcohol and Drug Foundation adf.org.au

This tip sheet offers general information only and does not replace advice from your GP, psychologist or other health professional.