

Alcohol: harm minimisation strategies

General tips for safer drinking

Stay hydrated: drink water before, during, and after alcohol consumption to prevent dehydration. Water can also help pace your drinking.

Eat before and while drinking: having a meal or snacks can slow the absorption of alcohol, helping to mitigate its effects and reduce hangovers.

Measure your drinks: use a nip-pourer for spirits to ensure you're not consuming more than intended. This helps keep track of standard drink units.

Set personal limits: decide in advance how much you'll drink, how much you'll spend, and how long you'll stay out. Stick to these limits to avoid overconsumption.

Avoid mixing alcohol with other drugs: alcohol combined with other substances, including over-the-counter and prescribed medications, can lead to unpredictable and harmful effects.

The risks of sudden withdrawal

Withdrawal symptoms: these can start as early as two hours after the last drink and include anxiety, shaking, sweating, nausea, insomnia, and headaches.

Severe effects: more severe withdrawal can lead to hallucinations, seizures, and delirium tremens (DTs). Symptoms of DTs include confusion, rapid heartbeat, fever, and agitation.

Complications: sudden withdrawal can worsen underlying health issues such as liver disease, pancreatitis, and cardiovascular disorders.

Set = your body and mind

Alcohol can amplify how you're already feeling. Drinking when stressed or overwhelmed can increase the risk of harm. Being in a positive headspace and aware of your drinking habits can help you make safer choices.

Setting = your surroundings

Your environment can influence how much and how safely you drink. Being somewhere familiar, calm, and with people who respect your limits can help reduce pressure and support safer drinking.



Contact us for support

If you're struggling with alcohol or other drugs, we're here for you.

We offer a variety of community and residential programs throughout Queensland and New South Wales, helping thousands of people every year to navigate alcohol and drug challenges and move forward in life.

 **1300 727 957**

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Risky mixes with alcohol

Alcohol and benzodiazepines



Risks: this combination increases the risk of respiratory depression, as both substances depress the central nervous system. This can dangerously slow breathing and lead to coma or death.

Alcohol and opioids



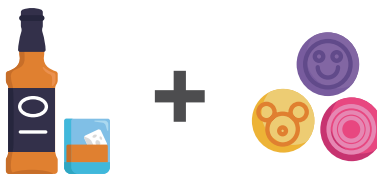
Risks: similar to benzodiazepines, mixing alcohol with opioids (such as morphine, heroin, oxycodone) increases sedation and the risk of respiratory depression, overdose, and death.

Alcohol and other stimulants (cocaine, amphetamines)



Risks: alcohol with stimulants can mask alcohol's effects, leading to overconsumption and acute poisoning. With cocaine, it can form cocaethylene, which lasts longer and is more toxic to the heart and liver.

Alcohol and MDMA (ecstasy)



Risks: both substances are dehydrating, and together can cause severe dehydration and electrolyte imbalance. There is increased risk of alcohol poisoning, as MDMA can mask alcohol's depressant effects.

Remember:

The effects of any substance can vary based on individual factors, environment, tolerance, and purity.

No dose is completely without risk. When possible, start low and go slow, avoid using alone, and take steps to care for yourself and others.