

FACTS ABOUT ALCOHOL

WHAT IS ALCOHOL?

Also known as booze, drink, goon, juice, liquor, piss, plonk, bevvies, nip, sauce, grog, charge. Alcohol is a depressant drug. The alcohol in drinks is called ethanol (ethyl alcohol) and is made when yeast ferments sugar. It is the most commonly used drug in Australia.

EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL

Effects depend on the person (age, weight, size, health and tolerance), as well as how much you drink, how quickly, and if you drink with other drugs or medications. As alcohol wears off, you may experience "hangover" effects which can last 1 to 2 days.

Short-term effects, desired and undesired, may include:

- relaxed, more emotional (happier, sadder, angrier – depending on mood)
- slower reflexes and reactions, decreased heart rate
- loss of balance, concentration and co-ordination
- dehydration
- slurred speech, dizziness, blurred vision
- nausea or vomiting
- lower inhibitions, may lead to saying or doing things you normally wouldn't
- may result in alcohol poisoning, disrupted sleep, memory blackouts or hangovers.

Long-term effects may include...

- high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, liver disease, digestive problems, cancer, diabetes, reduced sex drive and fertility problems
- brain damage including learning difficulties, memory loss or dementia
- depression and anxiety
- alcohol dependence.

AUSTRALIAN ALCOHOL GUIDELINES

Drinking alcohol is never completely safe. To reduce health risks, healthy people should drink no more than 10 standard drinks of alcohol per week and no more than 4 standard drinks on any one day. To prevent harm, children and people aged under 18, and women who are planning a pregnancy, pregnant or breastfeeding should not drink any alcohol.

WHAT IS A STANDARD DRINK?

A standard drink contains 10 grams of alcohol. Check labels on bottles or packs to find out the number of standard drinks it contains. Standard drink amounts differ depending on the type of drink, as shown below:

- Light beer (2.7% alc/vol) 425 mL
- Mid strength beer (3.5% alc/vol) 375 mL
- Full strength beer (4.9% alc/vol) 285 mL
- Regular cider (4.9% alc/vol) 285 mL
- Sparkling wine (13% alc/vol) 100 mL
- Wine (13% alc/vol) 100 mL
- Fortified wine e.g. sherry, port (20% alc/vol) 60 mL
- Spirits e.g. vodka, gin, rum, whiskey (40% alc/vol) 30 mL

TIPS TO REDUCE RISK

If you choose to drink, the following will help reduce risk:

Before: take a friend with you, set a limit on how much you'll drink, have a meal and plan how to get home (to avoid drink driving).

During: keep track of how much you drink, go slow, pace yourself, eat food, stay active – dance, play pool or talk with friends, drink low to mid-strength alcohol and alternate with non-alcoholic drinks.

Avoid: drinking before going out (avoid “pre-loading”), participating in “shouts” or drinking games, eating salty snacks that make you thirsty, leaving your drinks unattended, letting others top up your drinks and drinking too much in one session “binging”.

HOW LONG DOES IT STAY IN YOUR BODY?

The liver breaks down alcohol in your body, usually at a rate of about one standard drink per hour. Remember, you can still be unsafe to drive in the morning after a night of heavy drinking.

IS ALCOHOL A PROBLEM?

It may be a problem if you agree with any of these statements:

- I struggle to limit or reduce the amount of alcohol I'm drinking
- I spend a lot of time drinking or recovering from drinking alcohol
- I often feel strong urges to drink alcohol
- I'm unable to perform tasks at work, school or home due to alcohol
- I have developed a tolerance to alcohol, so I need to drink more to feel effects
- I have withdrawal symptoms – nausea, sweating or shaking.

TIPS TO REDUCE PROBLEMATIC USE

- seek support from a health professional, as well as from family and friends
- avoid people, places, objects, feelings or situations associated with alcohol
- start doing activities you enjoy that don't involve drinking alcohol
- look after yourself – get enough sleep, follow a healthy diet, adopt a balanced lifestyle
- set some personal goals.

ALCOHOL AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people's brains are still developing up until their mid-20s. Alcohol can impair this development. It can also lead to greater risk taking, such as engaging in drink driving, unprotected sex or violence. Young people who drink are heavily influenced by their parents drinking, their peers, social media and advertising.

ALCOHOL AND SENIORS

As we age, people often experience a decline in health, including poorer balance, vision and co-ordination, and bones become thinner. Adding the effects of alcohol puts older people at greater risk of accidents, falls and fractures. Alcohol can also worsen existing health problems and interact badly with medications.

FOR SUPPORT – CALL DRUG ARM

CALL DRUG ARM CENTRAL INTAKE ON 07 3620 8880 DURING BUSINESS HOURS TO ACCESS FREE SUPPORT OR EMAIL INTAKE@DRUGARM.COM.AU. FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES, CALL 1300 656 800 OR EMAIL INFO@DRUGARM.COM.AU.

FOR 24/7 SUPPORT CALL:

ALCOHOL & DRUG INFORMATION SERVICE:
1800 177 833 (QLD) AND 1800 250 015 (NATIONAL).