

# ALCOHOL RELATED HARM

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**WayAhead  
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**“There is  
no drug  
on Earth  
that can  
make life  
meaningful”**

**Sarah Kane**

Australians are considered to consume large quantities of alcohol, with many drinking at harmful levels, including adolescents and young adults.

While research indicates that alcohol consumption is decreasing in some age groups, alcohol-related harm remains a significant social and health issue within Australian society.

## Physical health issues associated with high-risk alcohol consumption

- Cardiovascular disease
- Cancers
- Diabetes
- Weight gain and obesity
- Liver diseases
- Cognitive impairment/alcohol-related brain injury
- Nutrition-related conditions

## Mental health issues associated with high-risk alcohol consumption

Alcohol is responsible for a significant proportion of suicides globally, and risky drinking has been linked to both depression and anxiety, as well as to a reduction in the effectiveness of psychiatric medicines.

## Consequences of excessive alcohol consumption

Drinking and recovery from alcoholism can be socially isolating and impact heavily upon relationships.

Positive relationships may breakdown as a consequence of alcohol abuse.

Additionally, individuals in recovery may need to break ties or set firm boundaries with drinking friends when sober, which may add to the challenge of quitting alcohol.

## Additional consequences include:

- Alcohol-related incidents, including verbal abuse, physical abuse, domestic violence, as well as property damage and vandalism
- Drink driving causing accidents, injury and/or death
- Non-vehicular accidents and injuries
- Financial repercussion, including loss of income through loss of job

## Who is at risk?

Anyone can develop high-risk drinking behaviours and/or alcohol dependence; however, high-risk drinking has been found to be more prevalent among young men aged 18-29, individuals who identify as LGBTI, people with mental illnesses and Indigenous Australians<sup>6</sup>.

Peer pressure around alcohol is a significant risk factor for teenagers, with parental and sibling drinking behaviour playing a significant role. However, Australian drinking culture also results in peer pressure for adults which can also impact upon the decisions they make regarding alcohol.

## What is safe alcohol consumption?

No level of alcohol consumption is completely safe. However, the Australian government recommends that healthy men and women should consume no more than two standard drinks on any day to reduce the risk of alcohol-related harm<sup>7</sup>.

It is recommended that pregnant and breastfeeding women and individuals under the age of 18 abstain from alcohol completely.

Young people under the age of 15 are deemed to be at the greatest risk of alcohol-related harm.

## What is a standard drink?

- 375ml of mid strength beer
- 100ml of wine
- 30ml of high strength spirits

\*In Australia all alcoholic beverages purchased at a liquor store are required by law to clearly state their alcohol content on the label.

## Getting help

If you are concerned about your own or someone else's drinking behaviours speak to your GP who can provide further advice and/or refer you to appropriate services.

Treatment for alcohol dependence may involve medications, counselling, support groups and/or a residential treatment program.

## References

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# Where do I go for help?

## The WayAhead Directory

is an online resource providing a comprehensive list of mental health related services in NSW.

[www.WayAhead.org.au](http://www.WayAhead.org.au)

## Phone Lines

WayAhead Mental Health  
Information Line

1300 794 991

Alcohol & Drug Information Service

(02) 9361 8000

Alcohol & Drug Information Service  
Rural Area

1800 422 599

Transcultural Mental Health

(02) 9912 3850

## Useful Websites

Alcoholics Anonymous Australia

[www.aa.org.au](http://www.aa.org.au)

Family Drug Support

[www.adf.org.au](http://www.adf.org.au)

Smart Recovery

[www.smartrecoveryaustralia.com.au](http://www.smartrecoveryaustralia.com.au)

National Drug & Alcohol Agencies

[www.nada.org.au](http://www.nada.org.au)

Alcohol Self-Test

[www.medindia.net/patients/  
calculators/alcohol-self-screening-  
test.asp](http://www.medindia.net/patients/calculators/alcohol-self-screening-test.asp)



Translating & Interpreting Service

(TIS) 131 450

Please call the Mental Health  
Information Line through the  
Telephone Interpreter Service  
(TIS). Free to Australian citizens or  
permanent residents.

## Disclaimer

This information is for educational purposes. As neither brochures nor websites can diagnose people it is always important to obtain professional advice and/or help when needed.

This information may be reproduced with an acknowledgement to the Mental Health Association NSW.

The Association encourages feedback and welcomes comments about the information provided.

*Last reviewed by Jamie Saltoon 2017*

**“ I found people who  
understood exactly what I  
was going through ”**



