

Alcohol

What is it?

Alcohol is a legal drug in Australia for people over the age of 18. However, alcohol use can cause problems. Accident, injury, liver disease, heart disease and cancer are just some of many risks linked with drinking too much. You should drink no more than two standard drinks per day to reduce the lifetime risk of alcohol-related disease or injury.

Binge drinking can cause serious alcohol-related injuries. Binge drinking is consuming more than four standard drinks per day. Most people who have a problem with drinking can stop, or cut back, and improve their health in the process.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP will talk to you about how often you drink, how much and any symptoms you may have. They will help you develop a plan to cut down or stop alcohol, depending on your goal. Your GP will also:

- Check your overall health and wellbeing
- Test for any alcohol-related health issues, including physical and mental health

Your GP may also refer you to a drug and alcohol service for support or treatment.

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP will see you regularly to check the progress of your treatment plan. If you're finding it hard to cut down or stop drinking, your GP will modify your plan.

Your GP may:

- Talk to you about medications to help stop using alcohol
- Refer you to a specialist service, including inpatient detoxification if needed
- Check for any underlying health issues, such as depression or anxiety, that are making it hard for you to stop drinking

What can I do?

If you feel that your drinking is a problem, the first step is talking to your GP. They will work with you to make a plan and give you tools and resources to help you learn more about alcohol and your health.

If you relapse, remember that this happens to many people. Don't feel guilty or like a failure if you tried to stop drinking but couldn't. Keep trying – tomorrow is another day.

Standard Drinks

A standard drink is 10g of alcohol

There is one standard drink in:



375ml bottle of mid-strength beer



100ml of red or white wine



30ml of spirits

When should I call an ambulance?



Alcohol withdrawal can be dangerous for people with a high dependence. If you or someone you know who is stopping alcohol experiences tremors, extreme agitation or appears delirious, phone Triple 0 (000) immediately.

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Some strategies that may help you cut down or stop include:

- **Avoid social pressure** - limit time with friends who drink. Spend time with friends who don't drink
- **Change your drinking pattern** - start with non-alcoholic drinks and alternate with alcoholic drinks. Try drinks with a lower alcohol content. Switch from schooners to middies
- **Think about the benefits of not drinking** - these include improved sleep, mood, memory, sexual performance and work and family life. There are also benefits to your health, finances, and energy levels
- **Start new patterns of behaviour** - find new activities to replace the time spent drinking



What questions could I ask my doctor?

- What are the risks of long-term alcohol use?
- Where can I get help to stop drinking?
- Do I need medication?
- What if I can't stop?
- Should I cut down or stop completely?
- What supports are available?



What supports are available?

South Western Sydney Drug Health Services

Drug Health Services provides a range of services for people with drug and alcohol dependence. This includes services such as inpatient detoxification, counselling, advice and referrals to other treatment programs. Your GP can refer you or you can contact the central intake line on **9616 8586**.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

Does your drinking worry you? Find an AA meeting near you visit the website at aa.org.au or call **1300 222 222**.

Other support services

There are many other types of supports available to people experiencing drug and alcohol issues. They include:

- Individual and group programs
- Support groups
- Residential rehabilitation programs
- Detox units
- Phone support

To find out more about what services are available, go to the Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) website at yourroom.health.gov.au or call **1800 250 015**.

There are also a number of **e-health resources** available.

Where can I learn more?

- **Department of Health** - alcohol: health.gov.au
- **The Right Mix** - information about the impact of alcohol: therightmix.gov.au
- **Your Room** - alcohol: yourroom.health.gov.au
- **South Western Sydney Local Health District: swslhd.nsw.gov.au**
 - **Drug Health Services**
 - **Drug and alcohol services in south western Sydney**

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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