

Alcohol and the law

In Australia it's illegal to supply alcohol to anyone under the age of 18. If you are caught selling, supplying or buying alcohol for someone under 18 you may face legal action.

It is also illegal in Victoria to supply alcohol to someone who is under the age of 18 without their parent or guardian's permission – even if it's on private property including your home.

Alcohol and pregnancy

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can be harmful to your baby, so the best option is not to drink.

If you drink while pregnant, it may cause:

- Miscarriage
- Stillbirth
- Premature birth

Alcohol may also cause your baby to be born with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).

This means your baby may be born with:

- Low birth weight
- Attention and/or learning difficulties
- Facial abnormalities
- Damaged heart, kidneys, and other organs

Not many babies in Australia are born with FASD, but there are more born to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people than to non-Aboriginal Australians.

Giving up alcohol

If you want to give up alcohol, but have been drinking regularly for a long time, your body has to get used to working without it. This is why you may experience withdrawal symptoms. The symptoms usually start about four to twelve hours after the last drink and can last for about four to five days.

Symptoms include:

- Sweating
- Tremors
- Nausea
- Anxiety
- Seizures or fits

It's important to ask for medical help to get you through withdrawal safely.

If you, a family member, or a friend want 'Help and support' turn to the back page.

Help and support

DirectLine

Tel: 1800 888 236

24 hours, 7 days a week

Confidential AOD counselling and referral line

Family Drug Help

Tel: 1300 660 068

Monday to Friday 9am-9pm

Youth Support & Advocacy Service

Tel: 1800 014 446

24 hour toll free service

Service for people aged 12 – 21 years

Turning Point Alcohol & Drug Centre

Tel: 03 8413 8413

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service

Freecall: 1800 064 865

Harm Reduction Victoria

Tel: 03 9329 1500

Australian Drug Foundation

www.druginfo.adf.org.au

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

Tel: 03 9411 9411

www.vaccho.org.au

Read more about other drugs within your community in the *Healthy Spirit, Healthy Community* booklet, available at vaccho.org.au.



A guide to alcohol within our community



Healthy Spirit, Healthy Community



Alcohol

Street names

Booze, grog, piss, liquor, charge, nip.

Effects of alcohol

Alcohol affects everyone differently, but you may experience:

- Feeling relaxed
- Trouble concentrating
- Slower reflexes
- Increased confidence
- Feeling happier or sadder, depending on your mood

If you have a lot, you may also experience:

- Confusion
- Blurred vision
- Clumsiness
- Offensive and violent behaviour
- Memory loss
- Nausea and vomiting
- Passing out
- Coma
- Death

In an emergency

Call triple zero (000) if someone looks like they've had too much alcohol and are in trouble. Passing out is a sign that someone may overdose and in extreme cases can lead to death. Ambulance officers don't have to involve the police.

While you wait for help to arrive:

- Stay with the person and keep crowds back
- Make sure they have enough air and loosen tight clothing
- If they lie down, put them on their side in case they vomit

Hangovers

If you drink a lot, the next day you may experience a hangover including:

- Headaches
- Diarrhoea and nausea
- Tiredness and trembling
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure

- Dry mouth and eyes
- Trouble concentrating
- Anxiety
- Restless sleep

Sobering up

To sober up takes time. The liver gets rid of about one standard drink an hour. (Standard drinks are demonstrated below.) Sweating it out with exercise, cold showers, coffee, fresh air and/or vomiting will not speed up the process. They may make you feel better, but they don't get the alcohol out of your blood quicker. This means it may not be safe for you to drive or work the next day.

Standard drinks

Light beer - 2.7% alcohol

- *One 375ml can or stubby equals 0.8 standard drink*

Mid strength beer - 3.5% alcohol

- *One 375ml can or stubby equals 1 standard drink*

Full strength beer - 4.8% alcohol

- *One 375ml can or stubby equals 1.4 standard drinks*

Wine - 12% to 13% alcohol

- *One 100ml serve equals 1 standard drink*
- *One 150ml (average pub) serve equals 1.5 standard drinks*
- *One 750ml bottle equals 7.5 standard drinks*

Spirits - 40% alcohol

- *One 30ml shot equals 1 standard drink*
- *One 700ml bottle equals 22 standard drinks*

Premixed spirits - 5% alcohol

- *One 375ml can or bottle equals 1.5 standard drinks*

If you are unsure how many standard drinks your drink contains check on the label or ask the bar tender. If you're at someone's house pour your own drinks.

Long term effects

If you drink a lot of alcohol regularly, it may eventually cause:

- Liver and/or brain damage
- High blood pressure
- Regular colds or flu
- Difficulty getting an erection (males)

- Depression
- Poor memory
- Low fertility (males and females)
- Cancer in many parts of the body
- Needing to drink more to get the same effect
- Relying on alcohol to feel good
- No money for food and bills
- Letting down your family and community

Mixing alcohol with other drugs

The effects of drinking and taking other drugs – including over-the-counter or prescribed medications – can be unpredictable and dangerous.

Alcohol + Cannabis = nausea, vomiting, panic, anxiety and paranoia.

Alcohol + Energy drinks (with caffeine), Ice, Speed or Ecstasy = more risky behaviour, body under great stress, overdose more likely.

Alcohol + GHB or Benzos = decreased heart rate, overdose more likely.

Responsible drinking

While there is no safe level of drinking, the National Health and Medical Research Council has developed a set of guidelines to help you drink responsibly. If you are healthy (and not pregnant or under 18), the guidelines recommend:

- No more than two standard drinks a day to reduce long term harm to your health.
- No more than four standard drinks on any one occasion (for example at a party) to avoid injuring yourself or other people.

If you are drinking, it's a good idea to:

- Drink low alcohol drinks
- Eat before and while you are drinking, but avoid salty snacks
- Pace yourself
- Alternate between alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks
- Keep track of the number of standard drinks you've drunk
- Don't be pressured into drinking more than you want to
- Avoid sitting around and drinking for a long time – stay busy