



Alcohol is the most widely used drug in Australia. Moderate drinking is usually accepted and sociable. For some people, drinking can get out of control and cause harm to themselves and others.



A.K.A: **booze, grog, drink, tinnies, liquor**

Alcohol slows down your coordination, judgement and response time. Alcohol will not necessarily make you feel depressed, but it can exaggerate the mood you were in before you started to drink. If you have a mental health issue like depression, alcohol can make these feelings stronger.

What's a standard drink?

Many different alcoholic drinks are available. Some are 'easier' to drink than others—for example if they taste sweet—but remember they all contain alcohol. We measure the amount of alcohol in 'standard drinks', with one standard drink containing 10 grams of pure alcohol.

Type	One Standard Drink	How Strong?
Full strength beer	Three-quarters of a 375ml stubbie, or one 285ml pot/middy/schooner/handle	4.9% alcohol
Wine/champagne	100ml - a small glass	12-14% alcohol
Alcoholic soda (e.g. 'Breezers')	Two-thirds of a 330ml bottle	5.5% alcohol
Shots of spirit/liqueur	30ml (a shot)	40% alcohol

Drinks served in bars can be bigger than a standard drink. For example, a large wine glass can hold two standard drinks or even more.

What's the limit?

Australian medical experts (National Health and Medical Research Centre Council) recommend that, to avoid long-term harm:

- ➔ Males have no more than four standard drinks a day and no more than 28 standard drinks a week
- ➔ Everyone should have at least one or two alcohol-free days every week
- ➔ Females have no more than two standard drinks a day and no more than 14 standard drinks a week

Drinks should not be consumed quickly (no more than two drinks in the first hour for males, and no more than one drink an hour for females). Take special care if you are taking medication, are pregnant, or will be driving, operating machinery or doing something that is risky or needs skill.

What are the immediate effects of alcohol?

The effects of alcohol depend on things like your age, sex and body weight; your general health; how regularly you drink; what you are drinking; how much you drink and how quickly; and whether you have eaten. The effects also depend on the mood you were in when you started drinking, and the circumstances at the time (for example, whether you are alone or with friends). Drinking while using other drugs can have unpredictable effects.



Alcohol & Binge Drinking

Drinking too much can cause lots of short-term problems, like headaches, feeling sick and vomiting, feeling dizzy, dehydration, passing out, and generally feeling 'hung over'. It's possible to overdose and die from alcohol poisoning. Importantly, being drunk can lead to being aggressive and getting into fights, having unsafe sex, and being vulnerable to assault and rape. Everyone knows about the dangers of drink-driving, and the risks of being killed or seriously injured - and killing or injuring someone else.



How can alcohol affect my health?

Too much alcohol can also lead to long-term health problems, ranging from brain damage to liver and heart damage, stomach ulcers and higher cancer risk. It can also lead to you being dependent on alcohol. Being able to 'hold' your drink might be a sign that you are developing a problem.



Is occasional binge drinking OK?

Some people think that because they don't drink every day, there is no real problem with heavy drinking (binge drinking) maybe once a week. In fact, the short-term risks, including alcohol poisoning, are worse than with moderate drinking.



How can I limit the amount I drink?

Sometimes it's hard to say 'no' to alcohol, especially if everyone around you is drinking. Here are some hints to help you limit the amount you drink:

- Eat before drinking and while you are drinking
- Drink water in between alcoholic drinks
- Finish your drink before topping it up, so you can keep count
- Don't drink by yourself
- Leave early if you think you are going to drink too much
- Take small sips, and drink slowly
- Know your limits
- Try having days and weekends without drinking
- Avoid drinking if you have school, uni or work the next day
- Drink low-alcohol drinks
- Avoid rounds (or shouts).



How do I know when alcohol is a problem?

Here are some signs that your drinking might be a problem:

- Not being able to concentrate and difficulties with study or work
- Often feeling hung-over
- Thinking about drinking more often than not
- Feeling on edge
- Having to drink more to feel the effect of alcohol
- Not being able to stop when you want to.

If you, or your friends or family, think your drinking is a problem, then take it seriously and talk about it. It's not always easy to change your drinking patterns, but other people can help. Try speaking with a trusted family member, friend, doctor or counsellor.

For more information, and to find out how to get help, visit the headspace website: www.headspace.org.au