



headspace
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

Alcohol

Alcohol AKA **booze, piss, grog, drink.**

What is it?

A lot of people don't think about alcohol as a drug – but it's the most widely used drug in Australia and is really easy to get. There are many different kinds of alcohol, like beer, cider, wine and spirits.



Many people feel pressured to drink. If you choose to drink alcohol, it should be on your terms. There is no "safe way" to use alcohol; however, if you are choosing to drink, it is important that you drink as safely as possible.

What does it do?

How alcohol will make you feel depends on lots of things like how much you weigh, how healthy you are, how regularly you drink, the kind of mood you're in when you drink and the people you are drinking with. But as a general rule, alcohol will relax you, make you feel more confident and less inhibited, slow down your reflexes and affect your balance and coordination.

Drinking too much can give you headaches, make you feel dizzy, sick or cause you to vomit. In extreme cases you might even pass out and not remember what happened.

The effects of alcohol can last for hours, especially if you have drunk a lot. When it wears off you may feel tired, thirsty, headachy and sick or have an upset tummy. This usually won't last longer than a day.

Alcohol and your mental health

One of the major reasons people drink alcohol is to change their mood. This is why people think drinking alcohol is so much fun. You can pretty much expect whatever mood you were in before you started drinking to be amplified. So if you were feeling happy, you will feel really happy.

If you felt anxious or depressed before you started drinking you

will probably feel much worse once the effects have worn off. This can have a big effect on people who have depression and other mental health problems.

Alcohol will make you less inhibited so you might say stuff you wouldn't normally say or do stuff you wouldn't normally do. This can lead to feeling really bad the next day if you said



mean things to a mate, or to your boyfriend or girlfriend, or had a fight with someone.

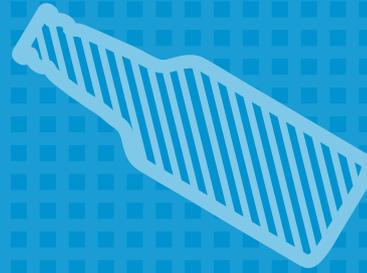
Alcohol and your physical health



Long term alcohol use can also cause problems with your physical health, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, brain damage, liver disease as well as different kinds of cancers.



Alcohol



What happens if I stop drinking?

It can be tricky giving up drinking if you've been doing it for a long time, because your body has to get used to going without it. If you are dependent on alcohol and you suddenly stop drinking, you might get withdrawal symptoms including sweating, feeling sick, anxiety, irritability, problems sleeping, tremors (e.g. shaking hands), even seizures or fits. Because of this, it's a good idea to have



a chat to a general practitioner (GP) to discuss the safest way of cutting down your drinking.

When someone overdoses

In some cases, drinking too much can cause someone to overdose. How this looks may be different depending on what's happening for the person (e.g. they may have mixed alcohol with other drugs), but too much alcohol can cause fits, irregular or shallow breathing, pale or blue looking skin, or unconsciousness. If something like this happens, some sensible things you can do are:



Call 000 – you won't get into trouble for asking for help.



Don't leave your friend alone.



Put your friend on their side if they are unconscious or in case they vomit.



Keep an eye on their breathing.

Staying safe

If you are going to drink, here are some tips to help you and your mates stay safe:

Don't drink alone.	Eat before and while you are drinking.	Drink water in between alcoholic drinks and/or drink low alcohol drinks.
Slow down. Finish one drink before the next and sip instead of scull.	Avoid rounds (or shouts).	Take it in turns to stay sober so that one of you can drive everyone else home safely. If not, keep enough money for a cab.
Look out for your mates. Keep an eye on them if they get sick, make sure they are okay to get home and don't let them get into risky situations.	Try having days and weekends without drinking.	Avoid drinking if you have school, uni or work the next day.

Getting help

If your alcohol use is starting to affect things that matter, like your mental health, wellbeing or your friendships, it can be a good idea to talk to someone about your options, such as different ways to reduce or stop your use. Whatever you decide, **headspace** can help.



headspace
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre or for online and telephone support, visit headspace.org.au