

**RESEARCH
THE RISK.
REDUCE
THE HARM.
ALCOHOL**

WHAT IS ALCOHOL?

Alcohol is a broad class of organic compounds usually referred to as ethanol. Other forms are used for cleaning, disinfecting, or fuel.

Ethanol is a colourless, volatile liquid made by fermenting sugars from grains or fruits. It's the most widely used drug for altering consciousness.

LONG TERM RISKS

Alcohol dependence – drinking regularly can lead to feeling unable to function without drinking, with alcohol becoming a major part of life. People may need to drink more to feel the same effect or prioritise drinking over responsibilities and then keep drinking despite the consequences.

Withdrawal symptoms – issues can occur when trying to stop drinking. These can include insomnia, shaking, heightened anxiety and, in severe cases seizures, which can be fatal.

Mental health – alcohol can cause stress at home or work as well as affect brain chemistry, increasing the risk of depression. Poor mental health can lead to more drinking, and more drinking can worsen mental health.

SUPPORT

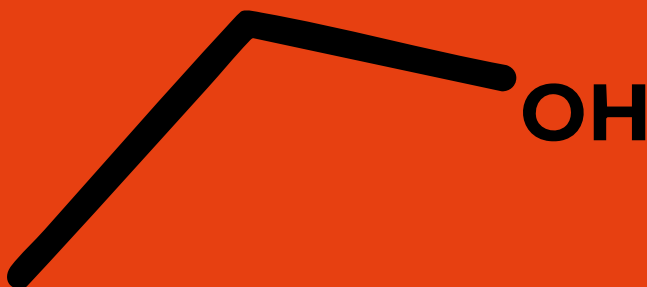
UWE Drugs and Alcohol Service:
1:1 sessions, advice and information
including harm reduction intervention,
goal setting and relapse prevention.

Make an appointment by scanning this QR
code or visiting uwe.ac.uk/drugs-and-alcohol



Bristol Drugs Project:
treatment services for people
who are experiencing a
negative relationship with
drugs and/or alcohol.

Or speak to your GP.



BEFORE

WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE THE HARM OF ALCOHOL?

- Eating before you drink will protect the stomach lining and slow down the onset rate of the alcohol.
- This helps you pace yourself better and will hopefully avoid nausea, bloating, or general stomach discomfort.
- Plan what are you going to drink, how much and what time you'd like to be home by.
- Thinking about these things before you start drinking will help you achieve the night out you want!

THINK ABOUT YOUR MINDSET...

- How we are feeling can impact our experience of using alcohol.
- Using alcohol when we are feeling anxious can result in us drinking quicker and more than we intended.
- Using alcohol when feeling down or upset can have unintended consequences such as being more impulsive or getting more upset than we were before we started.
- This can increase the risk of hurting ourselves or someone else.

AND SETTING

- The environment you're in can change your experience of using alcohol.
- Think about who you're with, or if you're ok drinking on your own.
- Do you know the people you're with? Will they be supportive and caring if you need some help?
- Is this a safe and comfortable environment to drink?
- Thinking about mindset and setting is a useful tool when deciding to use any drug including alcohol.

DURING

SAFETY FIRST

- Do not drink and drive - it's not worth it!
- Carry condoms.
- Avoid drinking alone.

PACE YOURSELF

- Avoid drinking in rounds as you'll have to keep pace with the fastest drinker.
- Consider spritzers, lager tops or low percentage spirits to avoid drinking too much.
- Take breaks – if it's safe to do so, put your drink down in between sips.
- Swap out every other drink for a non-alcoholic option to stay hydrated and pace yourself.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

- If you plan on mixing alcohol with other substances including prescribed medication like SSRI's (Anti-depressants), research how they will interact at [drugsandme](https://www.drugsandme.com)

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY FRIEND NEEDS HELP OR JUST NEEDS TO SLEEP IT OFF?

- If you spot these signs, your friend could have alcohol poisoning, which can be fatal if left untreated. Remember **MUST HELP** and then call for help:

Mental confusion. **U**nresponsive **S**nores / Gasping for breath. **T**hrowing up. **H**ypothermia. **E**rratic Breathing. **L**oss of consciousness. **P**ale or blue skin.

AFTER

HANGXIETY

- Drinking alcohol suppresses anxiety chemicals but as it is processed and leaves the body, the anxiety chemicals can rebound coming back stronger than before.
- Hangxiety can also be exacerbated from blacking out or having periods of time where you can't remember what happened, which will fuel the anxiety further.
- To try to help the feelings, get out of bed, drink a large glass of water, have a shower and speak to a trusted friend about how you're feeling.
- If you know alcohol affects your anxiety, consider drinking less.

HAIR OF THE DOG

- Drinking alcohol when you're hungover is just delaying the inevitable and runs the risk of the hangover being even worse than it was initially.
- There is no cure for a hangover other than time.

TAKE A BREAK

- The recommended weekly limit/maximum for alcohol consumption is 14 units.
- Having multiple days off alcohol each week may help prevent you becoming reliant on alcohol.
- Think about making plans with friends which don't involve alcohol.