

# Young people and alcohol

Alcohol is a drug that has significant effects on the body. Alcohol consumption can affect brain development in children and young people and can lead to alcohol-related problems later in life. Children under 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking. Not drinking in this age group is especially important. For young people aged 15 to 17 years, the safest option is to delay starting to drink for as long as possible. If you choose not to drink, you are in good company. The majority of young Australians aged 14 to 19 years don't drink alcohol on a regular basis.

## Risks of drinking too much on a single occasion:

- > overdosing on alcohol (sometimes called alcohol poisoning), which can cause death
- > being assaulted or getting in a fight
- > causing or being in a car accident
- > risky sexual activity, unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases
- > shame and embarrassment about your behaviour
- > loss of valuable items such as a damaged car or mobile phone
- > financial losses through reckless spending while intoxicated
- > loss of income through time off work.

## If you choose to drink despite the risks:

- > Drink no more than the recommended low-risk levels for adults:
  - **No more than four standard drinks on a single occasion** – this reduces the risk of alcohol-related injury arising from that occasion.
  - **No more than two standard drinks on any day** – this reduces your risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury over a lifetime.
- > Have a water or soft drink to quench your thirst before you start drinking alcohol. Tap water is free at places where alcohol is served.
- > Set a limit and count your drinks. Remember, one drink is not always one standard drink (eg two stubbies of regular beer is about three standard drinks – for more information about standard drink sizes visit <http://www.alcohol.gov.au/internet/alcohol/publishing.nsf/content/drinksguide-cnt>).
- > Eat before and while you are drinking. Alcohol is absorbed much more slowly when your stomach is full.
- > One drink at a time. Avoid drinking in rounds and topping up drinks, as it becomes difficult to keep track of how much you've had to drink.
- > Pace yourself. Have a non-alcohol drink in between alcoholic drinks as a spacer and take sips not gulps.
- > Keep active. Dance, play pool etc – you tend to drink less. Avoid just sitting and drinking. If you are very active, remember to drink lots of water.



- > Try low-alcohol alternatives (eg light or mid-strength beer).
- > Plan safe transport. Have a designated driver, keep enough money to pay for a taxi or use public transport.
- > Never mix alcohol with illicit drugs. It can be extremely dangerous. If taking prescription medications, check if their effects can be interfered with by alcohol.
- > Keep an eye on your drink and don't accept drinks from strangers as other substances could be added without you knowing.

#### Look after each other:

- > If someone is drinking and passes out or becomes unable to speak, call an ambulance immediately. **Dial 000.**
- > To reduce the risk of an unconscious person vomiting and choking to death, turn them on their side in the safety position, make sure their airways are clear and do not leave them alone.
- > If friends choose *not to drink* they should be supported in this decision.

#### Planning a party:

Parties don't always go as planned, particularly if alcohol becomes a factor. Here are some tips for a safer, more hassle-free party:

- > Ask your parents or another adult to help you plan.
- > Don't use social media or texts to invite people as the invitation may be shared. Instead, print invitations and include an rsvp.
- > Use a guest list and check who enters the premises.
- > Let everyone know the finish time and start winding the party up about an hour before.
- > Ask people to plan how they will get home – taxi or parent pick up.
- > Provide food and have plenty of non-alcoholic drinks and water available.
- > Ask a responsible person who is not partying to be a bartender.
- > Don't top up people's glasses. Make sure everyone can be aware of how much they are drinking.
- > Have an action plan in case something goes wrong.
- > Have a responsible adult act as security.
- > Provide a safe chill-out area that is supervised by someone trustworthy.

When planning a party with alcohol there are some legal things to consider. Visit [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au) and click on Health topics > Legal matters > Alcohol laws to learn more.

For more information about Planning and party, Attending a party or Schoolies, go to the [Young people and alcohol](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au) page on the SA Health website [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au).

#### For more information

**Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)**  
**Phone: 1300 13 1340**  
**Confidential telephone counselling and information**  
**8.30am to 10pm every day.**

[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/dassa](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/dassa)

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