



Alcohol

Drinking alcohol is a culturally significant activity in Australia.

Responsible drinking is about balancing enjoyment with potential risks and harms that may arise from drinking.

Your gender, age, mental and physical health can change how alcohol affects you.

Discussion Date

Supervisor/Manager

Workers' Names

Alcohol guidelines

Risky alcohol use is defined as:

- To reduce the risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury, healthy adults should drink no more than 10 standard drinks a week and no more than 4 standard drinks on any one day.

Not drinking alcohol is the safest option for pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, and people aged under 18.

Immediate effects of alcohol

Although you may feel relaxed and more sociable after one or two drinks, alcohol is a depressant which slows mental and physical responses.

Even small amounts of alcohol may:

- impair judgement about speed and distance
- slow reaction times
- affect muscle coordination, reflexes, vision, and hearing
- produce a false sense of confidence
- contribute to aggressive or inappropriate behaviour
- reduce sleep quality and patterns.

Ask for help if you are struggling with alcohol use.

Ask others if they need help.



Longer-term effects of alcohol

Long-term risky drinking may result in a range of mental, physical or social problems, such as:

- mental illness (e.g., depression)
- driving offences
- domestic violence
- inadequate sleep and fatigue
- weight gain
- high blood pressure.

Chronic illnesses associated with long-term risky drinking include:

- liver damage or disease
- some cancers
- oral health problems
- cardiovascular disease
- obesity and diabetes.

Impacts on workplace safety and relationships

Workers may be affected by alcohol if they drink:

- prior to commencing work
- at work
- during their leisure hours.

Alcohol can impact work health, safety, wellbeing and productivity by:

1. affecting your general work skills, ability to operate machinery, and/or drive safely
2. making you over-confident, increasing risk of injury or accident
3. impairing relationships with co-workers and customers
4. producing hangover effects such as headaches, tiredness, shakiness, nausea and vomiting
5. reducing workplace morale.

Workers who drive, operate machinery, or work in safety sensitive situations put themselves and others at risk when affected by alcohol.

Ask for help if you are struggling with alcohol use.

Ask others if they need help.



Discussion topics

1. How long before you start work do you think it is 'safe' to consume alcohol?
2. Would you feel safe working with an alcohol-affected co-worker? Why/why not?
3. Have you ever been concerned about your own or someone else's alcohol use at work? How did you handle your concerns?
4. Who would you speak to, or get advice from, if you had concerns about your own or someone else's alcohol use?
5. What would stop you speaking to someone or getting advice?
6. How can workplaces best help workers who are experiencing problems with alcohol use?

Handouts (available from the WorkLife website)

1. Alcohol and Drug Foundation. Alcohol Facts.
2. Australian Government Department of Health:
 - Reduce your risk guidelines
 - Standard drinks guide
 - How to reduce alcohol consumption.
3. Hello Sunday Morning Daybreak Program and App.
4. NSW Department of Health. Your Room website. Standard drinks calculator.
5. SafeWork SA, Alcohol & drug information.

Resources and handouts are available at <https://worklife.flinders.edu.au/external-site-resources>.

References are available at <https://worklife.flinders.edu.au/references>.