

# Alcohol and Injury

Alcohol is the most widely used drug. It is estimated that four out of five Australians over the age of 14 years drink alcohol. A high level of alcohol consumption contributes to disability and death through injury, violence, suicide and homicide. It also increases the risk of heart, stroke and vascular diseases, liver cirrhosis and some cancers<sup>1</sup>.

[www.iccwa.org.au](http://www.iccwa.org.au)

## Quick facts

- Alcohol is associated with:
  - 44% of fire related injuries.
  - 34% of falls and drownings.
  - 30% of car accidents.
  - 47% of assaults.
  - 16% of suicides.
- Risky alcohol consumption costs the WA community at least \$1.5 billion per year<sup>2</sup>.

## Know the Guidelines

For healthy men and women, drinking no more than two standard drinks on any day reduces the lifetime risk of alcohol-related harm.

For healthy men and women, drinking no more than four standard drinks on a single occasion reduces the risk of alcohol-related injury arising from that occasion.

Parents and carers should be advised that children under 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking and for this age group, not drinking alcohol is vital.

For young people aged 15–17 years, the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking for as long as possible.



For women who are breastfeeding, pregnant or planning a pregnancy, not drinking is the safest option<sup>3</sup>.

## What to do if you suspect someone you know has a drinking problem

- Encourage them to seek help or support from an appropriate professional.
- Do not pressure them or be judgemental.
- Be informed.

- Be open to discussing the issue.
- Call the Alcohol and Drug Information Service on (08) 9442 5000 or country free call on 1800 198 024. This service provides education programs, free booklets, support groups and telephone support<sup>4</sup>.

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## Long term prevention strategies

### Our Culture

We need to challenge the culture of drinking and social acceptance of drunkenness in our community. Changes need to be made at all levels to change our culture.

**Positive Role Modelling** is a key way to influence young people and others in our community.

### Community Education

All community members need to be aware of the harms associated with alcohol use. This can be achieved by effective community education programs and through positive media.

### Alcohol Advertising

Experts recommend further restrictions on alcohol advertising, in particular restricting exposure to children and young people.

### Responsible Service of Alcohol

There is a need for a highly regulated whole of venue training program to address patron intoxication and aggression as well as developing the skills of all venue staff.

### Law Enforcement and Legislation

which supports minimising alcohol related harm, such as a reduction in trading hours, outlet density restrictions, alcohol taxes based on alcohol volume and lowering Blood Alcohol Content limits.

## What can you do to take action in your community?

- Don't accept drunkenness and excessive alcohol consumption as a normal part of our society.
- Join your Local Drug Action Group (08 9370 0364) to make a difference in your community.
- If you read, hear or see something normalising or glorifying drunkenness, write a letter to the appropriate person. Take action!
- Join the WA Community Alcohol Network or contact the Injury Control Council of WA (08 9420 7212) for more tips.

## Information and support

The Salvation Army Bridge Program:  
08 9398 2077 (Gosnells) OR  
08 9227 8086 (Highgate)

Australian Drug Information Service  
(WA): 08 9442 5000 OR  
1800 198 024 (Rural WA)

DrugInfo Clearinghouse:  
1300 858 584

Family Drug Helpline: 1300 660 068  
OR National 03 9573 1701.

Drug and Alcohol Office:  
08 9370 0333 OR visit  
www.rethinkdrink.com.au

Parent Drug Information Service:  
08 9442 5050 OR 1800 653 203

CounsellingOnline:  
www.counsellingonline.org.au/en

Local Drug Action Groups:  
08 9370 0364 OR 08 9370 0386

WA Community Alcohol Network:  
08 9420 7212

WA Network of Alcohol & other  
Drug Agencies: 08 9420 7236  
or www.wanada.org.au

## References

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2008, *Australia's health 2008*, Cat. No. AUS 99, AIHW, Canberra.
2. Ridolfo, B. and Stevenson, C. 2001, *The quantification of drug-caused mortality and morbidity in Australia*, 1998, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra.
3. National Health and Medical Research Council 2009, *Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol*, Australian Government, Canberra, <[http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/\\_files\\_nhmrc/file/publications/synopses/ds10-alcohol.pdf](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/file/publications/synopses/ds10-alcohol.pdf)>.
4. Reach Out 2009, *Helping a friend with a drinking problem*, Reach Out, <<http://au.reachout.com/find/articles/helping-a-friend-with-a-drinking-problem#toc-more-information>>.

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ICCWA is the peak not for profit organisation involved in injury prevention and community safety promotion in Western Australia. Our mission is to reduce the incidence of injuries and their effects on the community.