

ASSIST DRUG INFORMATION CARD ALCOHOL

Street names

Grog, booze, plonk, piss, juice, sauce, bevvie, goon.

What is it?

Alcohol is a depressant drug which slows down activity to the central nervous system. It is produced by yeast and water, fermented with grains, vegetables or fruits. The potency of alcohol sold in Australia ranges from 0.9% for low alcohol beer, 12-14% for wines and up to 40-50% for most spirits.

What does it look like?

Liquid that can be clear/transparent through to a wide range of colours.

How is it usually taken?

Swallowed.

Immediate effects

Alcohol is absorbed quickly into the bloodstream and affects the brain in about five minutes. Depending on the amount, people can experience the following:

- A sense of relaxation
- Reduced inhibitions
- Loss of alertness and coordination, and slower reaction times
- Impaired memory and judgement
- Nausea and vomiting
- Blurred or double vision
- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Disturbed sexual functioning (such as difficulty in maintaining an erection)

The more alcohol a person drinks, the higher the risks of health, social, legal and financial issues including; injuries, falls, blackouts, arguments, unsafe sex, assaults, driving under the influence, motor vehicle accidents, and poor work performance.

It takes approximately 1 hour for the body process 1 standard drink.

Long-term effects

Alcohol is toxic to the body and long-term use has been linked to anxiety, depression, increased risk of infections, diabetes, memory loss, confusion and dependence.

Heavy use over a lifetime also increases the risks of:

- Cancers including oral, throat and breast
- Liver cirrhosis
- Pancreatitis
- Brain damage and dementia
- Heart attack and stroke.

Mixing alcohol with other drugs

Combining alcohol with other drugs (including over the counter and prescription drugs) can lead to unpredictable and dangerous effects.

Alcohol can stop medicines (like antibiotics) from working properly and can be fatal when mixed with other depressant drugs that slow down the central nervous system including:

- Benzodiazepines (Valium, Xanax)
- Sleeping pills
- Heroin
- Methadone
- Pharmaceutical opioids (Oxycontin, Oxycodone, Fentanyl, etc.)



Standard Drinks



Overdose

Alcohol poisoning can result in death. The lethal dose of alcohol can range 0.25-0.4 blood alcohol concentration which is between 10-14 standard drinks in one hour.

Harm reduction advice

To avoid damage to your health:

- Limit your alcohol intake to no more than 10 standard drinks per week and no more than 4 on any occasion
- Try not to drink daily, this increases your risk of dependence. Try to have at least 2 alcohol free days a week
- If you are pregnant, trying to fall pregnant or breast feeding, the safest option is not to drink.