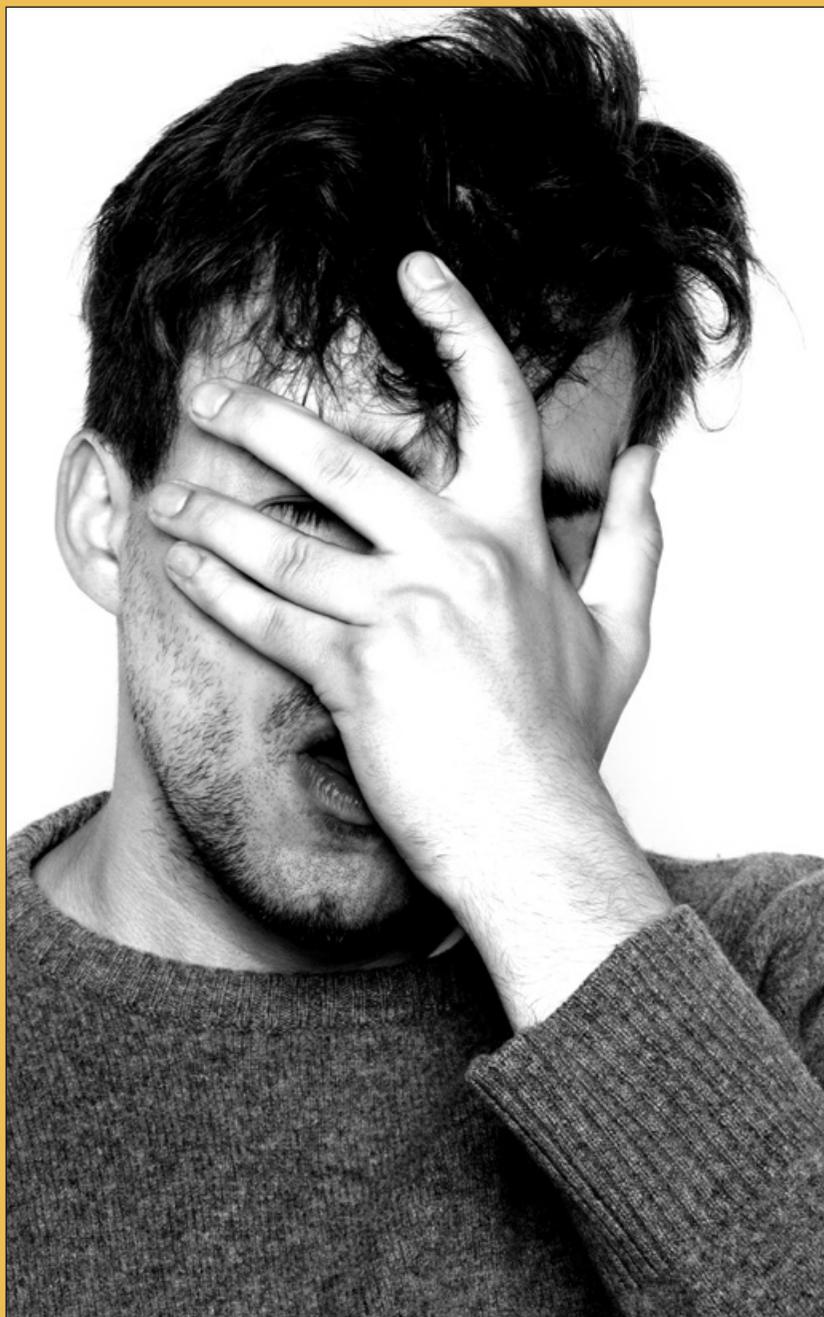

ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS IN THE WORKPLACE

A guide for employees about alcohol
and drugs in the workplace.





If you are hungover or coming down from drugs at work, it can be just as bad as being intoxicated. You are less effective and productive; this can impact both your work and that of co-workers.

Under workplace health and safety legislation, all employees have a responsibility to make sure they look after their own and their co-workers' safety.

The following information is a guide for employees about alcohol and drugs in the workplace.

Riders, Drivers, Horse and Greyhound handlers can be randomly tested for drugs and alcohol for the purpose of reducing risks to industry associated personnel with alcohol.

Alcohol is declared as a banned substance when alcohol is present at a concentration in excess of 0.02% on a breath analyser test taken from a rider or driver, or 0.05% when taken from greyhound and horse handlers.

Drugs and Alcohol in Racing

Licensed participants/employees can be tested for drugs and alcohol randomly for the purpose of reducing risks to industry.

Stewards are able to take a sample from any licensed participant prior to or after handling any horse or greyhound at any race meeting, official trial, jump out or in training.

THOROUGHBREDS

Refer Australian Rules of Racing AR 136/137.

HARNESS

Refer Harness Australia Rules of Racing AR 250/A, 251/A, 252/A/B/C/D.

GREYHOUNDS

Refer Local Rules of Racing 19.4/19.5 19.6/19.7 and 19.8

Employee responsibilities

- It's important to consider how your use of alcohol or drugs may impact your co-workers. The Work Health and Safety Act 2011 imposes a duty on all workers not to recklessly endanger others in the workplace.
- Different industries and workplaces may have more specific rights and responsibilities for employers and employees detailed in a separate policy. For example, some industries and workplaces may require people driving vehicles to have a zero blood alcohol concentration. Others may have policies about testing employees for alcohol or drugs.
- Make sure you are aware of your rights and responsibilities around alcohol within your workplace or industry.

Employer responsibilities

- Your employer has a legal obligation to address alcohol and other drug issues in the workplace through the duty-of-care provisions in the WHS Act. These provisions require employers to take reasonable or practicable steps to ensure the health and safety of all workers, contractors, clients and others who could be affected by the actions of the employer.





Preventing and reducing harms

Many Australians take at least one psychoactive drug on a regular basis - they might take medication (i.e. over-the-counter or via a prescription), drink alcohol, smoke tobacco or use an illegal drug. All drugs have the potential to cause harm. As use increases, so does the potential for harm.

Australia's national drug policy is based on harm minimisation. Strategies to minimise harm include encouraging people to avoid using a drug, through to helping people to reduce the risk of harm if they do use a drug. It aims to reduce all types of drug-related harm to both the individual and the community.

What is a drug?

A drug is any substance that, when taken or administered into the body has a physiological effect.

A psychoactive or psychotropic drug affects mental processes and can influence mood, behavior, cognition and perception.

Why do people use drugs?

People use drugs for many reasons; to relax, for enjoyment, to be part of a group, out of curiosity, as a coping mechanism or to minimize physical and/or psychological pain and trauma.

They use drugs for the benefits (perceived and/or experienced), not for the potential harm. This applies to both legal and illegal drugs.

Types of drug use

These are some of the different categories of drug use. People may use drugs in one or several categories, and one stage will not inevitably lead to another.

Experimental use: a person tries a drug once or twice out of curiosity.

Recreational use: a person chooses to use a drug for enjoyment, particularly to enhance a mood or social occasion.

Situational use: a drug is used to cope with the demands of particular situations.

Intensive use or 'bingeing': a person consumes a heavy amount of drugs over a short period of time, and/or uses continuously over a number of days or weeks.

Dependent use: a person becomes dependent on a drug after prolonged or heavy use over time. They feel a need to take the drug consistently in order to feel normal or to avoid uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms.

How could drugs affect you?

Drugs

The effects of any drug vary from person to person. How a drug affects a person can depend on their size, weight and health, also whether the person is used to taking the drug, and whether other drugs are in their system at the same time.

The effects will also depend on the amount taken. It can be hard to judge how much of an illegal drug has been taken, as they are uncontrolled, so quality and strength will vary from one batch to another

It can take several days to come down from drugs like ecstasy, ice and amphetamines. This means that drug usage can still impact your work for days following their use.

Prescribed Medications

There is always a level of risk when using any drug including prescription or over-the-counter medications.

If you are taking a drug you haven't had before, you won't know how it will affect you. It's important to follow your doctor's advice when taking prescription drugs and discuss any side-effects and how this might impact on your work. For instance, benzodiazepines (e.g. Valium®) and strong painkillers (e.g. codeine) can impact your work.

Types of drugs

**Get the
effects
by txt**

Get the effects by text

Text a drug name to 0439 835 563* to receive drug information via text message. **(standard call rates apply)*

Alcohol and other drug use can lead to long-term health problems for workers who may experience an increase in mental, physical and social problems and generally take longer to recover after an accident or illness. The use of alcohol and other drugs can also lead to increased risks or unpredictable behaviour when combined. For example, alcohol can magnify the effect of sleeping pills, tranquilisers, cold remedies and cannabis.

But it's only a hangover...

Alcohol

If you've had a big night, you may still be drunk the next day; this can make it dangerous to be at work. Sobering up takes time. As a guide, an average person in good health can process one standard drink per hour.

Hangover cures such as cold showers, doing exercise, strong coffee, or vomiting will not speed up the process. While these 'cures' may make you feel better, they won't change your blood alcohol concentration (BAC).



How substance abuse affects health

Substance abuse and addiction can have short-term and long-term impacts on physical, mental, social and financial health.

GET HELP IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING ANY OF THESE AFFECTS:

Physical health - nausea, aches and pains, sleep problems, weight gain/loss, infections, accidents, illness or chronic disease.

Mental health - depression, anxiety, paranoia, psychosis.

Personal relationships - family problems, arguments, relationship breakdowns, loss of friends.

Work or financial - job loss, trouble at work or study, debt, unemployment.

Social impacts - loss of interest or time to do things you like, reduced participation in social activities, criminal problems, anti-social behaviours, isolation.



The impacts

The use of alcohol and other drugs can impact on workplaces in a number of ways, affecting relationships, safety and productivity.

- One in 10 workers say they have been affected by a co-worker's misuse of alcohol. For example, a reduced ability to do their own job, involvement in an accident or close-call, and having to work extra hours to cover for a co-worker.¹



- Alcohol and drugs cost Australian workplaces an estimated \$6 billion per year in lost productivity.²



- Recent research has estimated that 2.5 million days are lost annually due to drinking and drug use, at a cost of more than \$680 million.³

The effects

On a work site, the use of alcohol and other drugs may result in:

- mistakes, accidents and injuries
- damage to workplace equipment, causing subsequent injuries
- a deterioration in workplace relationships
- increased sickness-related absenteeism
- lateness and lost time
- a decrease in productivity
- a decrease in staff morale.
- The residual effects of alcohol consumption (a 'hangover') may also impair work performance, especially memory retrieval processes.

Do I have a problem?

An alcohol or drug problem isn't always measured by how much, how many or what type of drugs you use, but by how the drug affects your life and the lives of the people around you. And this is often a matter of personal perception.

Here are some examples of a drug problem:

- Regularly returning from lunch a bit tipsy, then disturbing everyone at work and making it harder for them to work.
- Taking prescription medication for a long time, which causes memory problems, clumsiness and tiredness.
- Taking ecstasy or drinking alcohol heavily on your days off and then coming into work tired, irritable and moody.

What you can do

It is difficult to accept you have a problem and to ask for help. Be honest with yourself and others and get the help and support you need.

Recognise when your substance use has become a problem - realising and accepting that you are abusing or addicted to substances is the first step to finding help.

Get support - getting through this on your own can be difficult. Talk to friends, family, your doctor, other health professionals or a telephone helpline about your substance use.

Investigate options for help - manage and treat substance misuse and addiction through counselling, medication, rehabilitation centres, self-help programs or support networks. You might need to try a number of options before you find what works for you – it's important to keep trying.

Find alternative coping strategies - if you are using substances to cope with life or escape personal problems, find other ways to manage the situation and deal with life's stress and pressures. By dealing with other problems in your life you can make it easier to recover and not relapse.

Deal with setbacks and keep going - Recovery can be a long and difficult road. Expect some setbacks and don't focus on failures, focus on your plan and understand your triggers and how to best respond to them in future.

Concerned about a Co-worker?

If a co-worker's use of alcohol or other drugs is affecting you, then they have a problem. However, they may not be aware of it, so you may need to talk to them or their manager.

Find out the facts

If you are concerned that a co-worker is intoxicated or high while at work, it is important to be very sure that the person is under the influence of drugs —and not unwell — before you take action. It is very difficult to know if someone is impaired by the use of drugs or if someone is misusing them. Spend some time online learning about the facts at adf.org.au.

If you are concerned that a co-worker's drug use is affecting their work and/or the safety of others, it would be helpful to document evidence of incidents.



Speak Up

Speak to a manager or supervisor and seek their advice. Talk to a counsellor, health professional or your workplace's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for advice.

RELATIONSHIPS AUSTRALIA - 1300 364 277

Hobart: 20 Clare Street, New Town hobart@reltas.com.au
Launceston: 6 Paterson Street, Launceston launceston@reltas.com.au
Devonport: 68 North Fenton Street, Devonport devonport@reltas.com.au

Australia's fastest-growing drug problem is addictive medication. Many Australians are hooked on prescribed and over-the-counter medication than ever before and they don't even know it.



Key Statistics

If you're in your 20s or 30s you're more likely than any other age group to misuse addictive medications.

Between 2010 and 2013 the number of Australians misusing addictive medications rose from 7.4% to 11.4%.

Nearly 1,400 people die every year due to prescription and over-the-counter drug overdoses – that's more than the national road toll.

In Victoria alone, benzodiazepines were associated with 220 overdose deaths and opioid analgesics were associated with 183 overdose deaths in 2015.

KEY MESSAGES



MORE Australians are dying from overdosing or misusing their chemist bought medication than all illicit drugs combined.



Medications such as painkillers and tranquilisers are responsible for **7 out of 10** drug overdoses.



Overdoses are often the result of misuse such as mixing alcohol with medications and/or mixing medications.



Most overdoses are accidental.

Pharmaceutical misuse is Australia's fastest growing drug problem.



The number of people dying after using the most common form of opioid painkiller – **codeine** – has doubled in the past decade.

Pharmaceutical overdoses are overtaking our national road toll.





FURTHER INFORMATION

Australian Drug Foundation's Workplace Services team.

Tel: 03 9611 6100 or visit adf.org.au/programs-and-services/workplaceservices

Unions: If you are in a union, you can contact them for assistance.

WorkSafe Tasmania: 1300 366 322

Relationships Australia: 1300 364 277

Lifeline: 131114

www.ruralhealthtas.com.au

hellosundaymorning.org

www.adf.org.au

Your local doctor, other health professional, or workplace Employee Assistance Program (Relationships Australia) should be able to provide you with confidential advice or refer you to a more appropriate service.

References

1. ADF - Alcohol and Drug Foundation
2. Manning, M., Smith, C. & Mazerolle, P. (2013). The societal costs of alcohol misuse in Australia. Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice. 454. Canberra: Institute of Criminology.
3. Roche, A., Pidd, K. & Kostadinov, V. (2015). Alcohol – and drug-related absenteeism: a costly problem.