



Harm Minimisation: Alcohol

It is important to remember that the best way to avoid harms from using drugs is not to use them at all, however, if you choose to use drugs, you can also make some important choices to minimise the possible harm associated with your drug use.

2009 Healthy Drinking Guidelines

- For men and women, drinking no more than two standard drinks on any day reduces the lifetime risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury.
- For men and women, drinking no more than four standard drinks on a single occasion reduces the risk of alcohol-related injury from that occasion.

Harm-reduction strategies are designed to reduce the impact of alcohol-related harm on individuals and communities. Below are some ideas that may assist you and your friends to keep safe.

Harm Reduction Strategies

Transport

Planning your night out is a really important factor in keeping you and your friends safe. Planning to use public transport is a cheap way to get you home safely. Being under the influence whilst driving can affect your judgment and/or cause you to take more risks. It is not only unsafe but illegal.

Buying taxi vouchers, pre-paid bus tickets, or travel tens and keeping these in your purse or wallet is a great way to ensure you get home safely, especially if you find you have no cash to get home at the end of the night.

Money

So you don't end up spending your week's cash all in one 'big night out', it can be useful to leave credit cards and other ATM cards at home. Sometimes it can be tempting to splurge when you are under the influence of the drug you have taken.

Sex

Be prepared as impaired judgment can lead to unsafe or unwanted sex. For this reason always be prepared, and carry condoms or dams. Remember you need protection with oral sex as well. If you keep a condom and/or dams in your wallet or handbag, remember to check the expiry date every so often. Remember to use condoms and dams during oral sex as well as intercourse.

Re Balance Your Lifestyle

Doctor

Look after your general health and see your GP regularly for checkups. Look after your body, make sure you eat well and/or take multivitamins and get plenty of sleep and exercise so you have a good level of general health.

Safety

Stick with your mates. Always stay together with your friends or at least know each others' whereabouts for safety reasons.

Emergency

Know what to do if a friend is unconscious. Do not leave friends to 'sleep it off'. If a friend is unconscious place your friend in the recovery position, lay them on their side and check them regularly. Don't be afraid to call an ambulance. Dial 000 or 112 from a mobile.

So what is a safe level of drinking alcohol?

There is no safe level of drinking alcohol that is guaranteed to be completely 'safe' or 'risk free', however, it is suggested you drink no more than two standard drinks on any one day and that you have at least two alcohol free nights a week (2009 Healthy Drinking Guidelines).

It is your choice to drink, however, with some simple planning you can keep you and your friends safe and minimise some of the harms associated with your alcohol use. Be creative. Do some simple planning to help you and your peers remain as safe as possible.

If you would like to discuss harm reduction strategies, want some education on alcohol and/or drugs or maybe you feel like your drinking is out of control or causing problems and you'd like to talk to someone, call Manly Drug Education and Counselling Centre (MDECC) (02) 9977 0711.