



SNAPSHOT

2018



# Reducing alcohol-related harm snapshot

## Alcohol continues to be one of the major causes of preventable disease in Australia.<sup>1</sup>

Drinking alcohol is associated with a risk of developing health problems such as mental and behavioural disorders, liver cirrhosis, some cancers and cardiovascular diseases, as well as injuries resulting from violence and road crashes.<sup>2</sup>

Even drinking small amounts of alcohol can increase the risk of cancer, the more a person drinks the greater the risk. There is convincing evidence that alcohol use increases the risk of cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, oesophagus, liver, bowel (in men) and breast (in women), and strong evidence that it increases the risk of bowel cancer (in women).<sup>3</sup>

Excessive alcohol consumption not only affects the drinker's health but can also impact on those around them. More than 1 in 5 (22%) of Australians aged 14 and over had been a victim of an alcohol-related incident in 2016.<sup>4</sup>

There is a clear link between the amount of alcohol consumed and the level of harm, either in the short-term or long-term.

The health impacts from alcohol use vary for different age groups:

- **Drinking before and during pregnancy** can result in congenital abnormalities and disability in babies
- **Underage drinking** can affect the normal development of the brain
- **Young people, up to the age of 25** are at higher risk of alcohol-related harm, particularly due to a greater risk of accident and injury
- **Older people** can be more vulnerable to the effects of alcohol due to physiological changes associated with ageing.

## GOAL: to reduce alcohol-related harm in NSW

### Priorities:

- Deliver prevention, early intervention and pathways to care to minimise the impact of alcohol and other drugs on the community, particularly for those at risk of harm.
- Provide support for families and carers to help them manage the impact of alcohol and other drugs on the family and support those in need.
- Support whole of government priorities to enhance prevention and reduce harms from alcohol and other drug use.
- Provide information, education and referrals to improve knowledge about alcohol and other drugs, reduce stigma and help people make healthy choices.
- Enhance harm reduction efforts to improve the wellbeing of people and their communities and lessen the burden of disease on the health system.

## CURRENT SITUATION<sup>6</sup>

Young people are drinking alcohol more frequently.



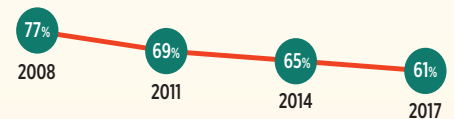
Daily or weekly drinking in people aged 16-24.

Long-term harmful alcohol drinking has been declining in NSW.



But has recently started increasing.

Adolescents are initiating drinking later.



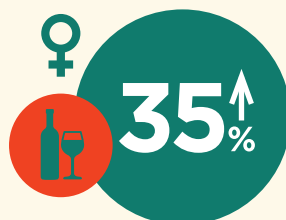
Secondary school students aged 12-17 ever consumed alcohol.

Compared to women, more men drink in excess of four standard drinks on a single occasion.



This puts them at immediate risk of harm.

Women (aged 45-54) drinking at long-term harmful levels, has increased by 35% since 2012



From one in six to one in four.

Aboriginal people are equally likely to abstain from drinking alcohol as non-Aboriginal people.



Among those who do drink a higher proportion drink at levels that place their long-term health at risk.

# Key programs and status

PRIORITIES	PROGRAMS	PROGRESS
<p><b>Deliver prevention and early intervention services and pathways to care to minimise the impact of alcohol on the community, particularly for those at risk of harm</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Drug Action Teams (CDATs) deliver education, information and skills building in local communities</li> <li>An online tool to identify and provide ongoing support for people to reduce their alcohol consumption</li> <li>The Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service Alcohol Reduction Program provides coaching, advice and referrals for people wanting to reduce their alcohol intake</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over 70 CDATs across the state, from Marrickville to Moree, delivered prevention and harm reduction messages</li> <li>The DrinksMeter app will provide a personalised risk assessment along with a drinks diary and goal setting for alcohol reduction and be available in early 2019</li> <li>Since its launch in 2016 the Alcohol Reduction Program continues to grow and in late 2017 the program was enhanced to support pregnant women</li> </ul>
<p><b>Provide support for families and carers to help them manage the impact of alcohol on the family and support those in need</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family Drug Support (FDS) provides telephone support to families in crisis 24 hours a day</li> <li>Strengthen and increase families awareness of treatment and support services</li> <li>In 2018, new youth treatment services are being established, incorporating support for families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FDS continues to respond to over 20,000 NSW callers a year and provide information, referral and support. On average over 20% of those calls were related to alcohol and more than 19% were from rural/regional NSW</li> <li>The Your Service Hub is a comprehensive, online directory of health and community services across NSW which families and carers can use to find local alcohol support services</li> </ul>
<p><b>Support whole of government priorities to enhance prevention and reduce harms from alcohol</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute to NSW Liquor Licence Applications</li> <li>Local Health District liquor licence response trial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2017 approximately 170 applications were received</li> <li>In 2018, a 6 month trial commenced of a system for supporting Local Health Districts to respond to local liquor licence applications to reduce community alcohol harms</li> </ul>
<p><b>Provide information, education and referrals to improve knowledge about alcohol, reduce stigma and help people make healthy choices</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alcohol and other drug information within schools</li> <li>Telephone information, advice, referrals and support through the 24 hour-a-day Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)</li> <li>Yourroom – a website for drug and alcohol information</li> <li>Drug Info – providing alcohol and other drug information through State Library of NSW and local libraries in NSW</li> <li>The <i>Stay strong</i> and healthy Facebook page raises awareness among Aboriginal women and their partners and families of the risks of alcohol consumption during pregnancy and supports pregnant Aboriginal women to make healthy lifestyle choices and seek support from health services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with the Department of Education to embed alcohol prevention and harm minimisation content in the new PDHPE curriculum</li> <li>Life Education NSW delivers curriculum based alcohol and other drug education, helping them to develop the awareness, knowledge, confidence and skills that they need to make more informed, safer and healthier choices. In 2016-17, Life Education delivered drug awareness and healthy lifestyle sessions to 277,000 NSW school children</li> <li>ADIS handled over 27 000 calls in 2017, alcohol remains the primary drug of concern (35%)</li> <li>Yourroom provides alcohol information, referral pathways and screening through a range of resources and tools. The website receives an average of 6500 visitors a month. An online 'chat' function will be launched in late 2018</li> <li>Drug Info print and/or electronic information resources can be accessed from 370 local libraries across NSW. A travelling Drug Info Hub brings interactive resources and community education events to 16 libraries each year</li> <li>In 2018 the Stay Strong Facebook page has had more than 32,000 views and 7,000 reactions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Enhance harm reduction efforts to improve the wellbeing of people and communities and lessen the burden of disease on the health system</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community mobilisation to identify local priorities and solutions</li> <li>DanceWize and Save A Mate – provide harm reduction services for people attending music festivals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The 'Tackling the availability of alcohol toolkit' provides a step by step guide for people wishing to comment on liquor licence applications in their local region</li> <li>In 2017-18, DanceWize provided services at 10 festivals and provided over 4 000 peer education interventions</li> <li>In 2018-19, Save A Mate is attending 16 music festivals in urban and regional areas, providing harm reduction information and crowd care services</li> </ul>

## Alcohol-related health conditions include:

### Mental health

- Dependence
- Depression
- Anxiety

### Brain

- Cognitive impairment

### Cardiovascular

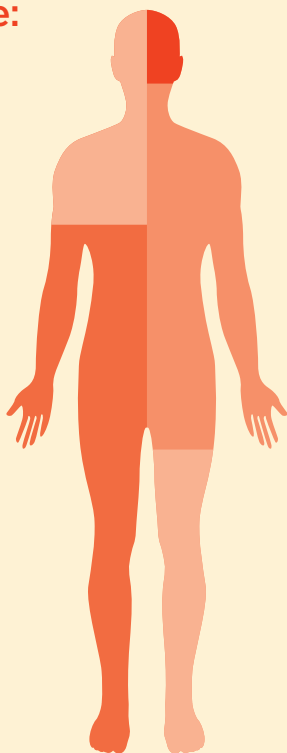
- High blood pressure
- Arrhythmia
- Cardiomyopathy

### Liver

- Cirrhosis
- Hepatitis

### Cancer

- Mouth
- Throat
- Oesophagus
- Liver
- Colorectal
- Breast









Source: National Health and Medical Research Council. *Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. 2009.<sup>3</sup>

# Guidelines and standard drink sizes

## National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines 2009

- 1 For healthy men and women, drinking no more than 2 standard drinks on any day reduces the lifetime risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury.
- 2 For healthy men and women, drinking no more than 4 standard drinks on a single occasion reduces the risk of alcohol-related injury arising from that occasion.
- 3
  - a. Parents and carers are advised that children under 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking and that for this age group, not drinking alcohol is especially important.
  - b. For young people aged 15–17 years, the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking for as long as possible.
- 4
  - a. For women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, not drinking is the safest option.
  - b. For women who are breastfeeding, not drinking is the safest option.

## What is a standard drink?

Beer			Wine		Spirits
Full strength	Mid-strength	Light	Red/White	Sparkling	Shot
					
4.6% Alc/Vol	3.5% Alc/Vol	2.7% Alc/Vol	12.6% Alc/Vol	12.6% Alc/Vol	40% Alc/Vol
285ml	375ml	425ml	100ml	100ml	30ml
1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0

## References

- 1 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. Australian Burden of Disease Study: impact and causes of illness and death in Australia 2011. Australian Burden of Disease Study series no. 3. Cat. No.BOD 4. Canberra: AIHW.
- 2 World Health Organisation 2015. Alcohol Fact Sheet.
- 3 Cancer Council Australia 2015. Position Statement – Alcohol and Cancer Risk.
- 4 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016.
- 5 The Royal Australian College of Physicians and the Royal Australian College of Psychiatrists 2016. Alcohol Policy.
- 6 NSW Population Health Survey. Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence, NSW Ministry of Health. Data between 2003 and 2017 are reported.

For more information contact:  
Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) NSW  
on 1800 250 015

Family Drug Support on 1300 368 186

Visit Your Room website at  
[www.yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au)

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