



Alcohol & You

Help during Covid-19

Research shows that drinking is increasing during this time. This leaflet provides advice, guidance and tools to help prevent harmful drinking habits.



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We are here to help you manage your alcohol use during this time

Noticed you're drinking more in Lockdown?

Given the unprecedented changes to our home and working lives in the last few weeks, research indicates that many of us are reaching for the bottle to try and cope with the changes. A trip to the local supermarket will further illustrate the impact of Lockdown on our drinking habits.

Why is it happening?

People often use alcohol to cope with challenging emotions. This uncertain time is naturally causing higher levels of stress, anxiety, loneliness and even anger. Additionally, there is a decrease for many of us in the amount of routine and structure in our lives. Some of us are not working at all, working different hours, working from home or even trying to balance teaching children on top of our other responsibilities.

The usual milestones we use to mark the week are also disrupted- no Park Runs on Saturday morning, no sporting events to attend, no chance to go to the shops, cinema or a favourite restaurant. As these “rewards” and treats are disrupted, having an alcoholic drink is a seemingly a quick, easy and appealing way to treat yourself.

So what's the problem?

For many people, the short-term effect of alcohol which is welcome: a feeling of being “away” from oneself, a change in headspace, switching off from worries and concerns. Some people may even feel that the occasional night drinking helps sleep. More regular drinking causes tolerance to build so more alcohol is needed to achieve the same effect.

Falling into a pattern of alcohol use now may create problems sooner than one might think. Increased alcohol intake is associated to mental health problems including anxiety, anger, depression and even self-harm and suicide. These challenges to mental health can come about quite quickly and can be harder to recognise and may affect the people you live with too.

We know that regular heavy drinking causes physical health risks to increase- for example the likelihood of developing cancer, heart disease, issues with the liver or kidneys and so on. Regular alcohol use can also cause weight gain and put people at higher risk of accidents within the home.

Time to act

We have brought together some tools to support you in making change to your alcohol use in order to keep it in check and reduce the risk of the adverse effects of heavy alcohol use. For further support around these issues, please contact us and we will be able to advise you on what support is available to suit your needs.

Keep a Drink Diary

One of the most effective ways for you to start your journey. It is critical that you keep an accurate and true reflection of your consumption. Carefully measure and monitor your drinks to help you gain a clear picture of where you are today. Units are an easy way to monitor this.

In the next few weeks you will take pride in watching unit numbers fall (and your savings increase!) using your drink diary.

Reasons for Drinking

Use your drink diary to help you, what seems to be the trigger or cause of your drinking? You might find there are multiple reasons, including it being a habit at a specific time of day, because you're worried or bored or even hungry. Consider some alternatives to drinking to help you manage these triggers.

Think about your drink

Incorporate at least two non-drinking days into your week - one of the most successful strategies for achieving healthier drinking levels. Some hints and tips to help you reduce your alcohol use on days you are drinking.

- **Decide how much** you will drink before you start
- **Eat** before your drink alcohol
- Leave your **alcoholic drinks away from where you are** drinking so you have to get up to refresh your glass
- **Take action in the supermarket**- if you don't have alcohol at home, you won't drink it- buy less, save money, drink less.

Healthy Coping Strategies

Have a think about activities and pastimes, some you may not have practiced for some time, that might help you keep active, busy and give you a feeling of accomplishment. Here is a list of suggestions- add your own ideas and chose a couple to try this week.

- Tidy Up
- Exercise
- Listen to Music
- Explore online learning
- Do some gardening
- Watch a boxset
- Do a crossword
- Join an online group
- Sing
- Learn a new skill

Goals and Rewards

We don't usually change our behaviours, unless there is a gain or benefit in it for us. Set a clear goal for the week around your drinking and consider what rewards you will put in place when you achieve your goal. The more practiced you are in not drinking, the more you will realise this is its own reward, but in the early days it pays to build in a treat (not alcohol though!).

We are here to help

If you would like advice, support or guidance, please remember we remain open during this time.

We are offering telephone and online support and are open for referrals.

You can self refer by visiting our website or giving us a call on 01483 590 150.

Please remember if you are a dependant drinker and you are concerned for your health, you should still seek medical help at this time. If you would like to stop drinking alcohol, cut down gradually as it can be dangerous to stop drinking suddenly.

We can help

Catalyst offer a range of support to help people in Surrey with drug and alcohol use



Reach Out Counselling

We have funding from the Big Lottery Community fund to provide counselling for those struggling with alcohol and drug use. This service is called Reach Out Counselling - we support individuals and also support friends and family in Surrey. To find out more visit: www.catalystsupport.org.uk/reach-out-counselling/



i-access

We partner with the NHS on a service called i-access. The service provides adult drug and alcohol support across Surrey. To find out more visit: www.surreydrugandalcohol.com

Get in Touch

Our services operate Monday - Friday - 9am -5pm

Reach Out Counselling

Tel: 01483 590 150

Text: 07909 631 623

E: info@catalystsupport.org.uk

W: www.catalystsupport.org.uk

i-access (a partnership with Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Trust)

Tel: 0300 222 5932

E: rxs.iaccess@nhs.net

W: www.surreydrugandalcohol.com

Other useful resources:

www.drinkcoach.org.uk

www.alcoholchange.org.uk

www.drinkaware.co.uk

www.nhs.uk/oneyou/for-your-body/drink-less/

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