

Supports available for people concerned about alcohol use

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With the extension of COVID restrictions affecting many Australians, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) is reminding people that there are supports available if they have concerns about their drinking or the drinking of someone they know.

FARE CEO, Caterina Giorgi, said that people might notice themselves drinking more frequently or drinking as a way to cope with anxiety or stress.

“Many of us are experiencing disrupted routines and increased levels of stress as we deal with the affect that the ongoing pandemic has on our everyday lives,” Ms Giorgi said.

“These feelings are unsettling and can increase the likelihood of turning to alcohol to cope. But alcohol increases anxiety and leads to sleep disturbance and having less energy.”

There are a few things to look out for if you are concerned about your alcohol use. These include:

- a family member or friend has expressed concern about your drinking
- feeling unable to complete everyday activities because of alcohol, and
- if your drinking has affected or harmed those around you.

When it comes to reducing alcohol intake, there are a few strategies that can help, like:

- set a limit and count your drinks
- have a few alcohol-free days every week, and
- establish new routines that don't include alcohol.

Ms Giorgi encouraged anyone concerned about their drinking to reach out to support services.

“There are a range of online, phone and face-to-face support that people can reach out to if they are concerned about their alcohol use or that of someone in their lives,” Ms Giorgi said.

Support is available by calling the National Alcohol and Other Drug hotline (1800 250 015) and online support sites [Daybreak](#), [Drinksmeter](#) and [Bushtribe](#).

More support services are available at www.fare.org.au/support/need-more-support

Background

Alcohol use patterns

- A FARE commissioned 2020 YouGov survey found that nearly one in five Australians (18%) reported drinking more alcohol since COVID-19 restrictions began¹.
- Several recent studies have shown that increases in alcohol use during COVID-19 have been driven by stress, depression and anxiety.² Studies have also shown work pressures and child caring have been drivers of increased alcohol use during COVID-19.³

¹ FARE (2020) Alcohol sales and use during COVID-19: Polling snapshot, <https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/COVID-19-POLL.pdf>

Alcohol harms

- Ambulance data from Victoria confirms how alcohol harms shifted to the home under lockdown. Before lockdowns, alcohol-intoxication attendances to the home accounted for 60% of all alcohol-intoxication attendances, but this increased in 2020 to 80%.⁴
- The National AOD Hotline recorded an approximate doubling in calls in January, February, March, April and May of 2020 compared with the same period in 2019.⁵
- A joint survey conducted by FARE and Women's Safety NSW in May 2020, found that 51% of frontline family violence workers say they've seen an increase in the involvement of alcohol as a stressor in family violence situations since COVID-19 restrictions began.⁶

Alcohol sales

- Data from the ABS shows that from 2019 to 2020, sales from alcohol companies increased by 27 per cent, resulting in \$3.3 billion of alcohol flowing into Australian homes to the detriment of the health and wellbeing of families and the community.⁷
- Online purchases of alcohol have been a big driver of this increased profiting by companies. A recent analysis by FARE found that visits to alcohol company websites like Dan Murphy's and Liquorland in 2020 increased dramatically. In 2020 there were 148 million visits to reviewed websites, a threefold increase from 2019 numbers.⁸

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The **Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE)** is the leading not-for-profit organisation working towards an Australia free from alcohol harms. We approach this through developing evidence-informed policy, enabling people-powered advocacy and delivering health promotion programs.

FARE has been working with communities across the country to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians for 20 years.

² Biddle et al (2020) Alcohol consumption during the COVID-19 period: May 2020, ANU Centre for Social Research Methods, <https://csmr.cass.anu.edu.au/research/publications/alcohol-consumption-during-covid-19-period-may-2020>

Tran et al (2020) Alcohol use and mental health status during the first months of COVID-19 pandemic in Australia, Journal of Affective Disorders https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0165032720327075?casa_token=zJDdnwIE10oAAAAA:ijDTwksF5T9-bLC12O-zGPI1llwCTegVzOfkiCzlyt012ZqZN7JO8mAAHf6YWqmZusPBO;

Callinan et al (2020) Purchasing, consumption, demographic and socioeconomic variables associated with shifts in alcohol consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic, Drug and Alcohol Review

³ Neill et al (2020) Alcohol use in Australia during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic: Initial results from the COLLATE project, Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/pcn.13099>

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⁴ Ogeil et al (2021) Changes in alcohol intoxication-related ambulance attendances during COVID-19: How have government announcements and policies affected ambulance call outs?, The Lancet Regional Health – Western Pacific <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666606521001310>

⁵ FARE (2020) Alcohol use and harm during COVID-19: Data report, <https://fare.org.au/alcohol-use-and-harm-during-covid-19/>

⁶ Women's Safety NSW and FARE (2020) Family violence and alcohol during COVID-19, May, http://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Family-violence-and-alcohol-during-COVID-19_final.pdf and Alcohol-use and harm during COVID-19 <https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Alcohol-use-and-harm-during-COVID-19.pdf>

⁷ FARE (2021) Australia records highest month in history for alcohol retailer turnover in December, <https://fare.org.au/australia-records-highest-month-in-history-for-alcohol-retailer-turnover-in-december/>

⁸ FARE (2021) Children put at risk from online sales and home delivery of alcoholic products, <https://fare.org.au/children-put-at-risk-from-online-sales-and-home-delivery-of-alcoholic-products/>