# Alcohol and mental health

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## How alcohol affects mental health

### Alcohol slows brain signals

Alcohol is a depressant drug, which slows down signals between the brain and body. This can reduce inhibitions and impair your judgement.

### Post-drinking 'hangxiety'

After the very short-term effects of alcohol wear off, the corresponding chemical changes in the brain create a 'rebound effect'.

This can create heightened feelings of stress and anxiety. People who already experience anxiety are more likely to also experience hangxiety.

Hangxiety is more likely to occur after a period of heavy drinking.

### Chemical imbalances

Over time, alcohol can deplete chemicals in the brain that help reduce anxiety and manage our ability to navigate stressful situations. Drinking alcohol can also interfere with our mental health and wellbeing.

### Disrupted sleep

Alcohol can disrupt our sleep patterns, particularly later in the night when the body and mind should be entering deep sleep.

Once the body has processed alcohol during the night, a rebound effect can make you experience frequent waking, night sweats, nightmares and headaches - and less deep sleep.

Having a lot of alcohol on one occasion can interfere with levels of melatonin (the chemical that makes you feel sleepy) for several days.

Sleeping well is crucial for maintaining mental health and wellbeing. Sleep helps us to consolidate memory, regulate emotions, support learning, creativity and immune function.

## Alternatives to reduce stress

Here are some things you can try to support your mental health and wellbeing.

Keep active and eat nutritious foods. Talk to a friend or family member about how you’re feeling. Practice mindfulness or meditation. Speak with your GP, a mental health professional or a support line. Make a plan to reduce your alcohol use. Start a journal to log your thoughts, habits and goals. Try out a new hobby Minimise screen time at least one hour before bed

### Tyler talks about alcohol and his mental health

As a young person in the bodyboarding community, Tyler became immersed in the alcohol culture that came along with it.

But alcohol wasn’t just a social thing – alcohol took over his mental health, and Tyler realised he couldn’t cope. He knew something had to change.

Find out how Tyler changed his relationship with alcohol.

Need mental health support right now?

If there’s an immediate risk of harm to yourself or others, please call:

****Triple Zero  |  000****

If you are feeling suicidal, or want to support someone who is, talk to a crisis counsellor now:

****Lifeline  |  13 11 14****(Every 30 seconds, a person in Australia reaches out to Lifeline for help.)

****Suicide Call Back  |  1300 659 467****(Provides 24/7 counselling to people affected by suicide.)

## If you require mental health support right now:

****Triple Zero  |  000****

**Lifeline  |  13 11 14 (call) or 0477 13 11 14 (text)**

(A 24/7 crisis support service, where anyone in Australia can call or text and speak to a trained crisis supporter.)

****Suicide Call Back  |  1300 659 467****(A free nationwide service providing 24/7 phone and online counselling to people affected by suicide.)

### Learn more about the relationship between alcohol and mental health

You can read more about the connections between alcohol and mental health on the Be Nice To Brain website:

[Explore how alcohol affects your mood and mental health](https://benicetobrain.org.au/" \t "_blank)

If you are looking to ease stress and anxiety, there are a range of healthy suggestions provided by Beyond Blue.

[Find out some strategies for reducing stress and anxiety](https://www.beyondblue.org.au/mental-health/wellbeing" \t "_blank)

More information

## Related information



## Need advice or support?

To find a local GP, you can call 1800 022 222 or visit [healthdirect.gov.au](http://healthdirect.gov.au). To find a local psychologist, visit [psychology.org.au/find-a-psychologist](http://psychology.org.au/find-a-psychologist). If you need other support to reduce your drinking, you can contact the National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline on 1800 250 015.

## Join our community

Will you join the community taking action on alcohol?