# Supporting friends and family

# Supporting friends and family

## Talking to someone about their alcohol use

If you are concerned about the alcohol use of someone you care about, it can help to have an honest conversation with them and offer your support.

It’s important to approach a conversation with empathy and sensitivity. Try to pick a place to talk where they are likely to feel safe and comfortable, and a time when they are feeling calm and open to talking.

If you can safely have a conversation, here are some tips that might help:

* Ask open ended questions to encourage them to talk, use positive and supportive language, and be ready to listen without blame, criticism, or judgment.
* A good conversation starter might be, “I’ve noticed you’ve been drinking more lately. How are you feeling?” or “I’m a bit worried about your drinking”.
* Keep the conversation focused on your concern about their health and the harms from alcohol and its effect on your relationship. Be honest about how you feel.
* If they are not ready to talk and get defensive or upset, be patient and try again another time. Allow time and space for them to open up to you about how they are feeling. Offer your support when they are ready.
* Find out what support is available if your friend or family member wants to cut back or quit. We have some [tips and tools available on this site](https://fare.org.au/resources/tips-and-tools/), as well as a page of [services that can help support both of you.](https://fare.org.au/support/)

If you think a conversation would lead to you being unsafe, then it’s best to reach out for support. There are [family support and family violence services](https://fare.org.au/support/) that may be able to help.

Download a copy of our information sheet [*Are you concerned about your drinking or the drinking of someone close to you*](https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/FARE-Fact-Sheet-Are-you-concerned-about-your-drinking.pdf)for more information and services you can contact.

## Supporting alcohol-free pregnancies – it takes a village

Many people stop drinking alcohol when they are pregnant or planning a pregnancy. This is because any alcohol consumed passes directly to the developing baby and can damage the baby’s brain, body and organs.

We can all actively support someone’s decision to have an alcohol-free pregnancy – whether it is through planning social events without alcohol, providing plenty of alcohol-free alternatives, or joining them in going alcohol-free.

You can be an important source of support by:

* Respecting the decision of your partner, friend, or family member to have an alcohol-free pregnancy to keep themselves and their baby healthy.
* Avoiding drinking alcohol around them when you are together.
* Choosing ways of socialising together that don’t involve alcohol, like going to a café, meeting for dinner, or unwinding with an activity like going for a walk.
* Backing them up if they are being pressured to drink alcohol in social situations, or letting other family and friends know they are not drinking alcohol and encouraging others to support their alcohol-free pregnancy.
* Offering non-alcoholic drinks or bringing non-alcoholic drinks to social events.

Learn more about alcohol and pregnancy, and how you can support alcohol-free pregnancies, at [Every Moment Matters](http://www.everymomentmatters.org.au). You can also download our information sheet [*What you can do to support someone to have an alcohol-free pregnancy.*](https://everymomentmatters.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/FARE_A4_FactSheet_Supporting-Partner-Friends-Family.pdf)

## Talking with young people about alcohol

Parents remain the single strongest influence on decisions children make around alcohol. It is important parents do not provide alcohol to children and young people — and make the time to speak with them about how to minimise the harms from alcohol.

Some suggestions for these conversations include:

* Have the conversation early, so you can both be prepared when pressure to drink alcohol or engage in risky behaviour takes place.
* Share information about the effects and risks of alcohol use, particularly around how it can affect your health or its impacts on young people.
* Set and negotiate expectations – be specific if you expect them not to drink any alcohol, and negotiate rules for how your family will manage events like parties or sleepovers.
* Be open, honest, and listen to their thoughts. Let them know they can talk to you if they have any questions.

You don’t have to be an expert, but it’s good to be prepared and ready with what you want to say and how, before you talk with your child or young person.

There is information and support available to help facilitate these honest conversations around alcohol. Check out [Supporting Family Conversations](https://supportingfamilyconversations.com.au/) and [Positive Choices](https://positivechoices.org.au/) for more resources.

## Alcohol and family violence

For far too many families, alcohol can make the risk of family violence worse. Alcohol use is a contributor to intimate partner violence, increasing both the frequency and severity of that violence.

Everyone has a right to feel safe in their own home. If you, or someone you know is experiencing physical or emotional violence, you can call 1800RESPECT for advice and support or visit [1800respect.org.au.](https://www.1800respect.org.au/)

## Financial problems and alcohol

Alcohol can reduce inhibitions and lead to behaviour you might later regret, such as gambling or excessive online purchasing, which makes financial problems worse.

If you, a friend, or a family member need financial support there are services you can turn to. For financial advice visit the [National Debt Helpline](https://ndh.org.au/) or call 1800 007 007. For gambling advice visit [Gambling Help Online](https://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au/) or call 1800 858 858.

## Join our community

Will you join the community taking action on alcohol?