

FARE launches initiative to support ACT women to cut back on risky drinking

To help address the short- and long-term effects of alcohol use, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) has launched Ripple, a project that supports women aged 40-65 in the ACT to reduce the amount of alcohol they drink.

Women aged over 40 are more likely to drink at risky levels than younger women, according to the [2019 National Drug Strategy Household Survey \(NDSHS\)](#).

Ripple is led by FARE, in collaboration with Centre for Alcohol Policy and Research (CAPR) at La Trobe University, and is funded by ACT Government Health Directorate under the Health Promotion Grants Program.

The project consists of two components, including a health promotion program incorporating resources, information and tips on a website to support thousands of ACT women to cut back on drinking, as well as a randomised control trial that aims to test effective ways to support women in this age group to reduce alcohol consumption.

Drinking less alcohol can elevate mood, improve concentration, and promote better sleep. This in turn can improve productivity at work and relationships with family members and friends.

Caterina Giorgi, CEO of FARE, said, “We call this program Ripple, because of the positive effects that ripple outward when people cut back on their alcohol use — from improved individual health and vitality to the benefits felt by those around you.”

“Drinking alcohol causes a range of health problems, from sleep disturbance and lack of energy to chronic illnesses like cancer and heart disease,” says Dr Anita Hutchison, a general practitioner based in Canberra and supporter of the Ripple project.

“As a GP, I have met with many women in our community who said that they feel great and well-rested when they cut back on drinking. And personally, I know how important it is to stay healthy and cut back on alcohol to help reduce the chances of short- and long-term health risks,” she added.

ACT Health Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith said, “The ACT Government is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of our community. Ripple aims to do exactly that by supporting women on their journey to cut back on alcohol.

“I encourage everyone to have a look at the Ripple website and share it with your friends and family members. The website includes very helpful information and the option to participate in a research study that will help FARE to better support women to reduce their drinking,” she added.

The randomised control trial will be led by CAPR, and aims to contribute to the evidence on the effectiveness of online interventions to increase motivation to reduce alcohol use among women in this age group.

“Recent trends show an increase in alcohol use among women aged 40-65 years, amidst the declines found in other population groups. There are very few studies examining this in detail and even less research on what may help women to reduce their alcohol use and prevent the negative impact it may have on their health and wellbeing,” said Dr Sandra Kuntsche, Principal Research Fellow at CAPR.

“We aim to overcome this by testing a newly developed online intervention focusing on 40- to 65-year-old women living in the ACT. The online intervention we are trialling is based on the most recent scientific evidence and was developed in close collaboration with women in that age group, allowing us to incorporate their needs, ideas, and goals,” she added.

An [ANU study](#) found that the frequency of alcohol consumption during COVID-19 was substantially higher for women than it was 2-3 years previously. Moreover, having child-care responsibilities was a strong predictor of an increase in alcohol consumption for women.

“The pandemic has been a period of heightened stress and anxiety – managing work and family during restrictions and lockdowns. Some people have turned to alcohol to deal with anxiety, but we know that increased alcohol use exacerbates the issue and leads to more anxiety,” Ms Giorgi said.

“Ripple aims to support women to cut back on their drinking, through the sharing of information and resources so that they can make informed decisions about their own health and wellbeing and of people around them,” she concluded.

To find out more about Ripple visit: www.fare.org.au/Ripple

Caterina Giorgi, CEO Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education is available for interview.

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

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