

ALCOHOL

And the effects on performance at work

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work

ALCOHOL IN THE WORKPLACE

The abuse of alcohol and other drugs may damage physical and mental health. The impairment of behaviour can cause affected employees to injure themselves or others.

- 1 in 20 workers admit to having worked under the influence of alcohol
- 1 in 10 workers reported they usually drink at work

Alcohol is the most widely used recreational drug in Australia. It affects both mental and motor function. The effects vary depending on individual tolerance and in general women have a lower tolerance than men.

The effects of alcohol on performance include:

- Initial stimulation
- Loss of inhibition
- Impairment of co-ordination, judgment and decision making
- Slow reaction times
- Decreased intellectual capacity
- Blurred vision, slurred speech
- Hangover-headache, shakiness, nausea and vomiting
- In the longer term, damage to the brain, liver, heart and stomach.

These effects can have implications for workplace safety, such as operating heavy machinery, equipment or driving a vehicle.

Alcohol can also impact

- Relationships with customers, clients and co-workers.
- Productivity, for example through people not turning up to work or people not working to the best of their ability because they are:
 - Affected by alcohol or hung-over
 - Experiencing alcohol-related illness or health issues
 - Experiencing difficulties outside of the workplace due to a family member's alcohol consumption
 - Covering for a co-worker who is affected by alcohol or hung-over.

Tips to reduce alcohol intake

The more alcohol a person drinks, the greater their risk of developing an alcohol-related injury or disease during their lifetime.

Healthy men and women should drink no more than two standard drinks on any day and try aim for 3-4 alcohol free days a week. Drink no more than four standard drinks on a single occasion to reduce the risk of alcohol related injury.

Alcohol is broken down by the liver at a rate of approximately 0.015 per cent per hour. Nothing can speed up the work of the liver - not black coffee, cold showers, exercise, vomiting or any other remedy.

TRY THESE TIPS:

1. **Switch off the reflexive Yes:** When you find yourself in any situation where you reach for a drink out of habit e.g. after work, after sport, out to dinner, when someone else is drinking. Check in with yourself if you really want or need a drink right now.
2. **Make sure you have at least 3-4 alcohol free days a week:** Work out in advance days when you can take a break from drinking and stick to them, preferably on work nights.
3. **Eat before and/or while you are drinking:** Make sure you have something substantial so your not drinking on an empty stomach.
4. **Substitute with non-alcoholic drinks:** Try a sparkling water with lime, mint, berries, fresh juice, a herbal tea or the non-alcoholic beer and wines on the market.
5. **Try drinks with a lower alcohol content:** These also have less kj (energy) so you also get less of the beer belly phenomenon.
6. **Drink slowly:** Enjoy the taste of each glass, this way you are likely to drink less.
7. If you feel that you rely on alcohol a few times a week... to reduce stress, help you cope, help you sleep etc. **mention this to your doctor and seek help to reduce your dependence.**