

COVID-19 HEALING FACT SHEETS:

How does Alcohol affect Mental Health



Alcohol is a depressant which means that it slows down the brain. Sometimes the pressure to drink comes from friends and family, but choosing to drink alcohol should be on your terms, because there's no 'safe way' to use alcohol. It's important that you drink as safely as possible if you're choosing to drink.

WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ALCOHOL AND MENTAL HEALTH?

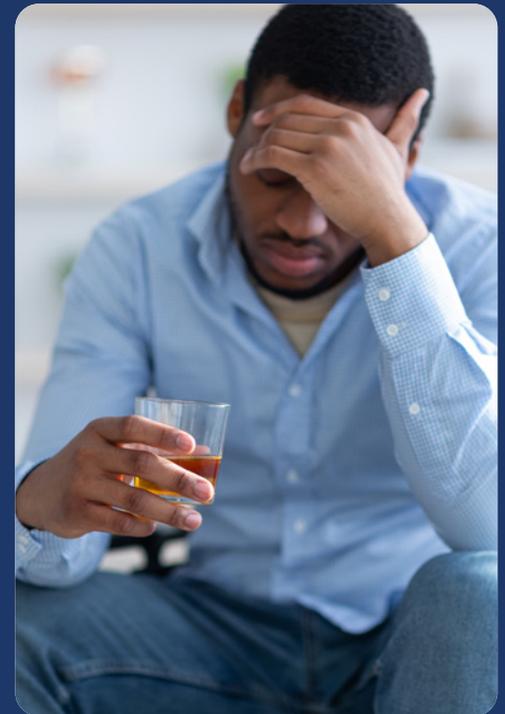
Alcohol can have a major impact on mental health. Because alcohol is a depressant, it slows your body down and changes the chemical makeup in your brain. This has many effects, it can alter:

- mood
- energy levels
- sleeping patterns
- concentration
- memory and many other things.

Alcohol also reduces inhibitions and impacts decision-making, leading us to make certain decisions while drinking that we would not make sober.

These can be positive or negative. It is also linked with:

- increases in risky behavior
- increases in aggression
- self-harm and suicide in people who may already be going through a tough time.



ALCOHOL AFFECTS YOUR MOOD

Frequent or heavy alcohol use can impact your mood and the ability to cope with tough times.

People who are experiencing a mental health difficulty may use alcohol to try and manage hard times, or lift their mood but it may make things much harder to handle in the long run.

Seek help if you depend on alcohol to cope with your situation.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I STOP DRINKING?

There are many benefits that can come from reducing or cutting out alcohol use. These may include:

- more energy
- better physical health
- better sleep
- improved mood
- saving money

Some of these benefits you might notice within a couple of days, whereas others can have a bigger impact the longer you reduce your use.

It can be tricky giving up drinking if you've been doing it for a long time, because your body has to get used to going without it. If you're dependent on alcohol and you suddenly stop drinking, you might get withdrawal symptoms including sweating, feeling sick, anxiety, irritability, problems sleeping and more.