

Alcohol Awareness Week 2020

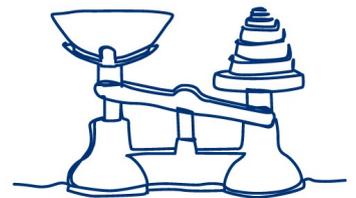
Alcohol and Your Mental Health

Alcohol and our mental health can have a complex relationship. We drink alcohol to celebrate, to commiserate and everything in between. For many of us, drinking alcohol is a big part of our social culture. One of the reasons some of us drink alcohol is to change our mood, our mental state.

Mental health problems can be caused by drinking too much alcohol and they can also cause people to drink too much. Some people use alcohol to try and manage their mental health, known as 'self-medication'. Alcohol can lower our inhibitions, can temporarily alleviate feelings of anxiety and depression and sometimes people use it to help with sleep. It can also numb our emotions to help deal with difficult things in our lives. However, these are all **very short term effects** and can quickly spiral into a downwards cycle.

Drinking alcohol decreases the level of serotonin (our "happy" chemical) and as a result of this a cycle can begin where we drink to relieve depression, which causes serotonin levels to be depleted further. This can result in us feeling more depressed and then drinking more and so on. It can also make it harder to rest and disrupt our sleep patterns - these are both important to staying mentally healthy.

An increased awareness around alcohol consumption and its impact on our mood and mental health, can help you find the balance. If you feel your alcohol consumption is having a negative impact on your mental health, or you are using alcohol to self medicate, reach out and seek help.



Know the risks...

Drinking alcohol when you are taking prescribed medications such as antidepressants and antipsychotics can prevent the drugs from working properly and increase symptoms of depression and psychosis. In some cases mixing alcohol and prescribed medication is fine and there are no side effects. However mixing alcohol and some prescribed medications can in some instances have side effects such as causing increased sedation, dizziness, impaired concentration, increased heart rate and even sleep walking.

- Always speak to your pharmacist or GP for advice about consuming alcohol if you are taking medication for your mental health
- Always read the instructions contained in the packaging with your medication.
- For more information visit www.choiceandmedication.org/sussex

If you would like more information on how you can look after your mental health and wellbeing, please visit mindcharity.co.uk or call 01273 66 69 50

