

# ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUG USE STUDENT RESOURCE

[swinburne.edu.au/safercommunity](https://swinburne.edu.au/safercommunity)

MADE BY THE SAFER COMMUNITY TEAM

## CREATING A SAFE AND RESPECTFUL SWINBURNE COMMUNITY.

### What are drugs?

Drugs are substances that alter the way your brain works. Drugs can include caffeine, prescription medication and alcohol as well as illicit substances such as ice, cocaine, ecstasy and LSD. People use drugs for a wide variety of reasons, usually with the aim of helping themselves physically, mentally or socially. When medically prescribed, drugs can have a positive impact on our health and wellbeing.

### Why use drugs?

In Australia, alcohol use has become a cultural norm, where 'having a drink' is a way to socialise and relax with friends and family. Recreational and experimental use of other drugs is also not uncommon among university students for the purposes of having fun, fitting in with others or sometimes, easing emotional and physical pain.

### Some statistics (Australia)\*

- 1 in 20 Australians have an addiction or substance abuse problem.
- 1 in 6 Australians drink at risky levels.
- 3 million Australians use illegal drugs every year, with the highest use among 20-29 year olds.
- 1 in 20 Australians misuse pharmaceuticals every year.

**For more information regarding  
alcohol & other drug use, visit:**

[swin.edu.au/healthinfo](https://swin.edu.au/healthinfo)

### When does drug use become a problem?

Using substances is a personal decision, however, it can become problematic if it begins to impact daily functioning, such as health, relationships, study and work. Excessive or prolonged use of substances can increase risk-taking behaviours, such as violence, unprotected sex and driving under the influence. It can also lead to a higher risk of mental illness, suicide and physical health conditions.

It can be hard to admit an alcohol and/or drug use problem. However, it is important to be aware of when the harm or risk associated with using outweighs its benefits.

### Signs to watch out for:

- Neglecting or having difficulty meeting your responsibilities at home, work or university.
- Frequently using to increase concentration or stay awake for work or study.
- Having to organise other events or needs around using.
- Using more than you intended to despite wanting to cut down or quit.
- Trying unsuccessfully to reduce or stop using.
- Having other people express concern about your use and suggesting you cut down.
- Experiencing difficulty remembering events prior to or during use.
- Experiencing recurring problems with health, safety, relationships, finances or the law due to using.
- Finding that you need to use in order to maintain friendships.
- Needing to use to cope with everyday life or previous experiences.
- Needing increasing amounts of the substance to have the same effect.
- Feeling sick or moody when not using but normal after using.
- Spending increased time using or planning to next use.

## CUTTING DOWN

If you notice that using alcohol and/or other drugs is having a negative impact on your life, you may want to consider cutting down. Changing your substance use can help you regain control over your use or serve as a step towards stopping completely. Reducing your substance use is challenging. It is often useful to try a range of strategies and get some help along the way.

**Remember, always talk to your doctor or get other medical advice before you cut down or stop using as some people experience severe withdrawal symptoms. Always seek medical assistance if you become unwell during a change or reduction in substance use.**

### Plan ahead

- Plan your use by setting limits on the day, time and amount you'll use.
- Plan how you will deal with times you might find difficult. You may need to avoid some situations at first.
- Prepare an answer if you're offered the substance. For example, you could say "Not tonight", "No, but you go ahead" or simply "No, thanks".

### Focus on other things

- Prioritise other activities over substance use to delay the first use and each use after that.
- Find a hobby or other activity that takes your mind off wanting to use.
- Remind yourself of the benefits of cutting down and why.
- Spend less time with friends who you use with or identify other things you have in common with them.

### Reward yourself & reflect

- Reward any efforts made to change your use, even if you do not always meet your goals.
- Each time you make a change, reflect on what you could do differently or the same next time.

### Get help

- Ask friends or family to support your efforts to change. Seek counselling support from a psychologist.
- Talk to a GP about pharmacological treatments.
- Join a support group.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP SOMEONE WITH A DRUG USE PROBLEM?

If someone you know experiences substance use issues, you can seek advice from professional support services. Here are some things to keep in mind when supporting someone:

### Provide support

- Approach the person with your concerns and express them non-judgementally.
- Do not criticise the person or use labels like 'addict'.
- Ask the person about their use, rather than make assumptions. Focus on their behaviour rather than their character.
- Use 'I' rather than 'you' statements to express your feelings. Let them know you are worried.
- Discuss support options and encourage the person to seek help from professionals and friends/family.
- If the person does not wish to change, support them but do not support their drug use.
- Inform the person about self-help options.

### Seek help

- If the person is in a dangerous alcohol and/or drug affected state contact Security or Emergency Services.
- If you are worried about someone's pattern of alcohol and/or drug use and its impact on them, speak to Safer Community and/or the counselling services at Wellbeing for advice\*.

# SUPPORT

## On Campus support

### SAFER COMMUNITY

Safer Community offers advice, support, intervention, and risk management for students who experience or witness inappropriate, concerning or threatening behaviours on or off campus. You can get in touch with the team by email or via the online reporting form:

[safercommunity@swin.edu.au](mailto:safercommunity@swin.edu.au)  
[swinburne.edu.au/incident-reporting-form](https://swinburne.edu.au/incident-reporting-form)  
[swinburne.edu.au/safercommunity](https://swinburne.edu.au/safercommunity)

### SWINBURNE SECURITY

Contact campus security services for emergencies on campus, after hours assistance or for a security escort.

03 9214 3333

### CRISIS LINE - OUT OF HOURS

The Swinburne crisis line is available to help 24 hours a day on weekends and public holidays, and outside business hours on weekdays (before 9am and after 5pm).

Call 1300 854 144

Text 0488 884 145

### STUDENT COUNSELLING

If you are struggling with a personal, emotional or mental health difficulty, whether related to your studies or your life away from university, counselling may help. Register and make an appointment with the counselling services.

03 9214 8483

[swinburne.edu.au/counselling](https://swinburne.edu.au/counselling)

### INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY SERVICE

Swinburne Student Life provides policy advice, support and guidance in academic issues, and advocates for best outcomes in complaints, grievances, appeals and misconduct hearings.

03 9214 5445

[studentlife@swin.edu.au](mailto:studentlife@swin.edu.au)  
[swinburne.edu.au/advocacy](https://swinburne.edu.au/advocacy)

### ACCESSABILITY

Advises students with a disability on what reasonable adjustments can be made to ensure equal opportunity to access and participate in their education at Swinburne.

03 9214 5234

[swinburne.edu.au/accessability](https://swinburne.edu.au/accessability)

## Off Campus support

### POLICE

National emergency response and reporting.

In emergencies call 000

[police.vic.gov.au](https://police.vic.gov.au)

### LIFELINE

24/7 phone crisis support and suicide prevention.

13 11 14

[lifeline.org.au](https://lifeline.org.au)

### COUNSELLING ONLINE

Counselling Online is a service that provides free online text-based counselling to alcohol and other drug users, their family members and friends. It is provided by Turning Point, a substance use treatment centre. Counselling Online is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

[counsellingonline.org.au](https://counsellingonline.org.au)

### EHEADSPACE

A confidential, free and secure space to chat to qualified youth mental health professionals.

[eheadspace.org.au](https://eheadspace.org.au)

### ALCOHOL AND DRUG INFORMATION SERVICES

Available across Australia 24 hours a day and will answer any questions about alcohol, tobacco or other drugs.

VIC 03 9418 1011

Statewide Freecall 1800 888 236

[fds.org.au](https://fds.org.au)

### ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AND NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

Provide mutual support for people recovering from substance use disorders. Their websites provide contacts for groups in any part of Australia.

[aa.org.au](https://aa.org.au)

[na.org.au](https://na.org.au)