



Worried About Someone’s Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Alcohol or drug use by someone that you care about can be confusing and stressful, but you are not alone.

On average, 5 people are affected by 1 person’s dependency on alcohol or other drugs.

Looking after yourself while supporting them

The most important thing to remember is that people cannot change unless they wish to. The person using alcohol or other drugs is responsible for their own choices.

Your key responsibility is to look after yourself, and keep yourself safe.

You don’t have to do things that you are uncomfortable with or take risks, to help someone. Setting and keeping boundaries is not only helpful to you, it is helpful to the person you are worried about.

If you are affected by, or witness violence, remove yourself from the situation and seek help from the police, a domestic violence service or another help service.

Violence is never OK.

It is more than OK to seek support for yourself, and many services can help you and your family deal with this difficult issue. This factsheet aims to provide you with information and tips to help you deal with this difficult life situation.

The most important thing to remember is people cannot change unless they wish to.

How do I know if someone is using alcohol or other drugs?

You may notice things that could indicate drug use, such as:

- Mood swings or personality changes
- Changes in sleeping patterns
- Changes in spending habits
- Increased risk taking
- Finding substances or items that could be used to take drugs
- Behaviour changes that don’t seem normal and are worrying to you.

These could also indicate problems other than drug use, such as mental or physical health issues, so often the best way is to ask them directly.

They may choose not to answer, but you can let them know that you care about them and that you want them to be healthy and happy.

It is also important to respect that person's privacy and not look through their things without permission.

How do I stop them from using drugs?

Trying to force someone to change their behaviour or stop using drugs is often counterproductive. Offering support can help them take the right steps.

How do I ask about someone's drug use?

Pick a time and place where everyone feels comfortable, safe, and calm.

Try to be respectful – express your concern, but try not to judge or accuse.

Ask the person if they are OK, if they are worried or stressed about something or having trouble coping. This might let them open up if they're worried about their own drug use. If you've noticed something that worries you, let them know gently: **'I'm worried about...'**, **'I noticed...'**

What is my role? What can I do?

Get informed

Knowing more about the issue can help you assess the situation and feel more prepared. Speaking to a local alcohol and other drug (AOD) service, or speaking to your GP, are great places to start. See the back of the brochure for suggested places for help and support.

Offer support

Sometimes, the best support you can offer is simply to listen, and be present. It is important to only offer support that you are willing to give, and only if you can do it while taking care of your own wellbeing.

Help them get help

Ask your person if they have asked for help before, and if they're willing to try accessing help. They might not know where to begin – that's OK!

Offering Help

You can offer to help them find services, make appointments, or go to the appointments with them. See the end of this factsheet for suggested places for help and support.

What should I expect?

Every situation is different. Some people will want to change their behaviour, and others will not be ready yet or won't want to stop or reduce at all. Some people use drugs and alcohol recreationally, and take steps to keep safe. Some people may become dependent on the drug they're using, and need extra help to recover.

Withdrawal and recovery from AOD dependence is complicated with many people experiencing relapse. Ensure you have the necessary backing and energy to continue support. If you don't, that's OK. Find a safe referral option.

Treatment services will be able to provide support for you and your family and can answer questions you may have about drugs, withdrawal, and recovery.

Help and Info

If you'd like to speak to someone, local treatment services will be able to provide support for you and your family, and can answer any questions you may have about alcohol, withdrawal, and recovery.

- Medicines Line 1300 MEDICINE
- Get the effects by txt! 0439 TELL ME - text the name of the drug you want info on
- tuneinnotout.com - youth website
- Youth Law Australia
- Parents, Elders and trusted friends
- GPs and Pharmacists
- Your Local Alcohol and Other Drug Services
- Fire, Ambulance, Police 000
- Lifeline Australia 13 11 14
- Kid's Helpline 1800 55 1800
- Poisons Information Centre 13 11 26
- Family Drug Support a 24/7 service fds.org.au or 1300 368 186
- CODE Community Online Drug Education