

Alcohol and Other Drugs

Staff Wellbeing Access Program

Alcohol and Other Drugs – *is your drinking catching up with you?*

COVID-19 is an extraordinary event, that the RACF workforce and health provider workforce have never experienced before. As such, we are being asked to do extraordinary things, over long periods of time and for how long, we do not know. We are a tired workforce who continue to show up for our residents, our colleagues, our families and our RACF community.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted on all aspects of our life in some form or another. We have all had to manage dramatic change and sometimes this change has occurred quickly. The change for you as part of the RACF Workforce has been substantial as it now shapes how you interact with residents and their loved ones, your coworkers and your RACF Community. As a workforce the norm for how you work is no longer what you have previously experienced when you walk in the door for work. For some you are now working from home and for others you are still must attending the workplace and with all of this you are required to undertake your roles in a vastly different way.

This constant change and your emotional response may impact how you are at home and in your social life. Many people turn to something to help them cope. Some turn to exercise, meditation or others may turn to alcohol or drugs. At home, after a long day at work you may have more than your usual one glass of wine or beer with your meal. Or you may turn to other substances other than alcohol such as cannabis or over the counter medications. Many people turn to alcohol and other substance to help them relax, sleep, or shut down. Research has found that alcohol and substance use dramatically increased during lock-downs due to COVID 19.

The effects of alcohol and the use of other substances “to cope” are quite detrimental.

Slowly over time the one drink can becomes another whilst it becomes part of your way to manage emotions and coping during stressful times. It becomes your escape from your experiencing, thoughts and feelings that experience at home, work, and internally. Quickly, you can build a tolerance to alcohol and other substances, and you may need more to get the same effect. This can lead to physical and mental dependance without realising it is happening. Now is a good time to think about changing your relationship with alcohol and other substances, to think about why you turn to it?

Alcohol & other substances



Signs of how you may have changed your relationship with substances.

- You turn to alcohol or other substance to cope or help you sleep – more and more
- Your alcohol intake is increasing to manage the emotional and physical impact from COVID.
- You may be bingeing or consuming excessive amounts
- Your tolerance to alcohol or other substances is increasing – thus you are consuming more
- Finding that when you are triggered by an event you turn to alcohol to manage your stress.
- Feeling restless or on edge as you may have a physical craving for alcohol due to possible dependence.
- Finding that your medication is not having the same therapeutic effect as before.

Things that may help:

- Create a new daily routine that can help to create a sense of normalcy and a transition between work and home.
- Use a diary to record your daily alcohol use so that you understand how often and how much you are drinking.
- Allow yourself to listen to your own monitor if you are hearing an internal alarm about your alcohol or other drug level of use.
- Seek professional help if you are feeling distressed or troubled by your alcohol and substance use and things are not improving for you.
- Complete a self-assessment to understand more about your use Visit the Drinkwise website: www.drinkwise.org.au
- Develop a creative list of ways to remain connected that do not include drinking, such as morning tea, walks with friends, or breakfast catch-ups
- Talk to your G.P. if you would like medical support to reduce the possible harm of your alcohol and substance use.

Tips for self-love

- Eat balanced, healthy meals.
- Minimise alcohol intake
- Create a regular sleep routine.
- Increase exercise or walking.
- Reach out to those important to you
- Take time to breathe.
- Learn mindfulness.
- Hug yourself and know you are amazing.

Where to get help:

- Access your Employee Assistance Program: your HR or Organisation's employee website or noticeboard should have further information.
- Contact HeadtoHealth on **1800 595 212** or visit: <https://headtohealthvic.org.au/>
- Make an appointment to see your G.P. for an emotional wellbeing health check and referral to a counsellor.
- Phone Directline who provide a 24/7 phone support line that is private and confidential: **1800 888 236**

Website links & resources:

1. Download the Hello Sunday Morning – Daybreak App: www.hellosundaymorning.org/daybreak/
2. Beyondblue – www.coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/
3. Smiling Mind – www.smilingmind.com.au/thrive-inside and smart phone app
4. Directline: <https://www.directline.org.au/>

Standard drinks – how much are you drinking?

