

Tip sheet

Alcohol and drugs

Across centuries, people have turned to alcohol and various drugs, and New Zealand's history echoes this trend. According to the NZ Health Survey (2021/2022), nearly half of adult Kiwis (49.0%) have tried recreational drugs at some stage, with 93% of Kiwis trying alcohol.

The motivations behind alcohol and drug usage are multifaceted, ranging from recreational pursuits to spiritual exploration, performance enhancement, peer influence, or as a means to alleviate physical or emotional distress.



The NZ Health Survey also tells us that close to one in five adults (18.8%) engage in drinking patterns that could jeopardise their wellbeing. This could mean binge-drinking or drinking to excess.

Depending on the substance, long-term use can lead to a number of mental and physical health issues, including (but not limited to):

- cancer;
- lung or heart disease;
- dental problems;
- impaired cognition and decision-making, leading to accidents at home or in the workplace;
- damage to the nervous system;
- development of mental health conditions;
- impact on relationships and finances;

- worsening symptoms of existing mental health conditions (such as anxiety or depression).

Managing alcohol and drug consumption involves creating healthy habits, setting boundaries and seeking support when needed. Here are some strategies to help...

Managing substance use

Set limits

Define clear limits for yourself regarding how much and how often you will consume alcohol or drugs. Stick to these limits to avoid excessive consumption.

Know your triggers

Identify situations, emotions, or people that trigger your desire to consume alcohol or drugs. Avoid or manage these triggers effectively.

Practice moderation

If you choose to consume alcohol, do so in moderation. Follow recommended guidelines for safe alcohol consumption at

www.alcohol.org.nz/help-and-support/advice/standard-drinks-and-legal-limits

Find alternatives

Seek alternative activities to drinking or drug use that provide enjoyment and relaxation. Engage in hobbies, exercise, or spend time with friends who support your healthy choices.

Develop coping strategies

Learn healthy ways to cope with stress, anxiety, or negative emotions without turning to alcohol or drugs. This may include deep breathing, meditation, or exercise.

Seek support

Surround yourself with supportive friends and family members who respect your choices and can provide encouragement when needed. Consider joining support groups or seeking professional help if you're struggling to manage your consumption.



Plan ahead

If you're going to be in situations where alcohol or drugs are present, plan ahead and decide in advance how much you will consume or if you will abstain altogether.

Stay informed

Educate yourself about the risks and consequences of excessive alcohol or drug use. Understanding the potential harm can motivate you to make healthier choices.

Take care of yourself

Prioritise self-care by getting enough sleep, eating a balanced diet, and exercising regularly. Taking care of your physical and mental health can reduce the desire to use alcohol or drugs as a coping mechanism.

Know when to get help

If you find it difficult to control your alcohol or drug consumption despite your efforts, or if it's causing problems in your life, don't hesitate to seek professional help from a counsellor or addiction specialist.

Remember, managing alcohol and drug consumption is a personal journey, and it's okay to seek help and support along the way.

Contact

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