

Alcohol / waipiro

Adapted from www.drugfoundation.org.nz/info and www.getselfhelp.co.uk

In the right situation alcohol tends to make people feel relaxed, more confident and sociable.

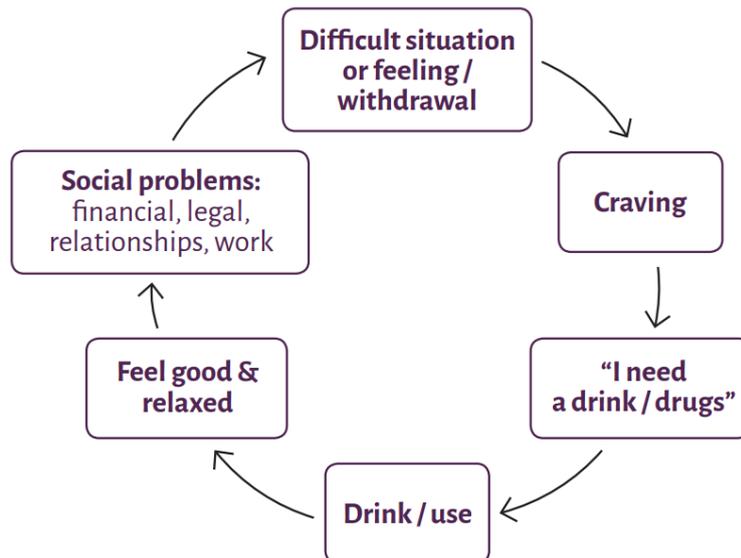
In the wrong situation, or when you drink quickly or more than your body can handle, this can give way to feelings of moodiness or sadness and difficulty managing these feelings.

Alcohol in any amount reduces your ability to concentrate and in larger amounts slows your reflexes and coordination. The physical and after effects of drinking too much, such as hangovers and blackouts, can also make people feel anxious and sad.

Use of alcohol often starts socially and for some people becomes a way of coping with difficult situations, or feeling depressed, nervous or anxious. When similar feelings or situations come up it can become very easy to use alcohol to feel better.

After a while though, as you start to rely more on drinking alcohol to help you feel better, the reasons you were drinking can become worse and new problems may emerge due to the impact of alcohol.

These can include problems with relationships, work, study and finances, as well as feeling depressed, anxious or angry. A vicious cycle can begin, as the diagram shows.



Alcohol / waipiro

Changing your relationship with alcohol

Problematic use of alcohol affects people across all walks and stages of life. Being affected by alcohol can be challenging and you may feel shame or alone with this problem at times. At other times it can be exhilarating to finally come to a decision about the need for change and to start putting a plan in place.

Having now talked about your worries and the place of alcohol in your life, you can use this self-help information as part of a support system towards change and safer use.

If you have been drinking more than 1 to 2 standard measures (100ml of wine, one nip of spirits or one can of beer) per day with no alcohol-free days for many months or more, you should NOT stop drinking alcohol suddenly on your own.

You will need a tailored health plan that provides you with the right support for your situation. You or your GP can initiate this with the help of your local Community Alcohol and Drug Service, which is provided for free through your local district health board (DHB).

These services are only a phone call away and are staffed with qualified and specially trained practitioners who provide full assessment, talking therapy and medical treatment if things are a little more challenging than what you and your GP can manage.

Supporting the decision to change

Building motivation

- List the advantages and disadvantages to help make your decision.
- Set goals for what you hope to achieve – you may decide to reduce how much or how often you drink.
- Keep a record of how much and how often you're drinking or spending on alcohol.
- Write down all the reasons why you want to make a change and keep a copy with you.
- Tell friends or whānau about your plan for change.

Putting the decision into action

Identify your triggers

What or when are the times you are more likely to drink? What are your triggers?

- Certain places, people or things?
- If you hear certain things?
- Certain memories?
- Worrying about future events?
- Feeling stressed, anxious, angry, sad?
- Self-critical thoughts?
- Feeling hungry or thirsty?
- Feeling lonely or tired?
- Parties?

Alcohol / waipiro

Tips for being safer with alcohol

If you are attempting to cut back on your alcohol, here are some tips for making change or being safer with alcohol.

- Choose to have alcohol free days.
- Don't drink alcohol for thirst – drink water!
- Delay your first drink of the day by an hour.
- Plan how many standard drinks you will have and stick to it.
- Buy only what you plan to drink.
- Eat food before drinking.
- Pace yourself.
- Have a spacer not a chaser.
- Take smaller sips.
- Put your glass down between sips.
- Occupy yourself.
- Change your drink for example from spirits to beer.
- Drink for taste.
- Avoid drinking beer and spirits together.
- Dilute your drinks.
- If going out, match the slowest drinker and avoid rounds.
- Be the sober driver.

Get to know your triggers

- Work out your triggers and high risk situations that might make you more likely to drink alcohol.
- Plan to avoid predictable triggers.
- If you have a slip or lapse, write down what was happening and the possible trigger(s). Add them to your list of triggers.

Social tips

- Seek help – others will support you if they see you're making changes. Start with whānau or friends, and/or your GP.
- Support groups – if you are really struggling you can find out about relevant local support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and other peer support groups through your local addiction service. Check out online support groups too, like Living Sober www.livingsober.org.nz
- Be with others – contact a friend or visit family.
- Avoid social situations which are all about drinking and not much else.

Being a bit savvy

- Try out different non-alcoholic drinks to use as an alternative for those times when you can't avoid being around alcohol.
- If you have decided to stop, practice saying “No – I don't drink”.
- Don't forget to congratulate yourself when you stick to your plan. You could set up a reward system so you can treat yourself for success.
- Pay attention to doing something else that involves all your senses, for example movement, sound, sight, smell and new tastes.
- Do something different (to what you normally do).
- Do something you really enjoy or do something relaxing.
- Get back into a hobby you have enjoyed in the past.

Alcohol / waipiro

Self-care tips

- Take up a new hobby, spend time with friends, family and whānau who do not have a problem with alcohol or drugs.
- Do some exercise – walk, jog, cycle, swim and dance.
- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water each day.
- Use medication only as prescribed.

Avoid replacing alcohol with drugs, like cannabis

- Eat healthy food three times a day.
- Put on some music, but not music you associate with alcohol use.

Thinking tips

- Imagine yourself being successful.
- Encourage yourself, tell yourself “I am doing this!”
- Relaxation.
- Meditation or karakia.
- Just take one step at a time – don’t plan too far ahead.
- If you have a setback – tell yourself it’s okay, figure out why it happened so you can learn from it but don’t dwell on it too much.

Further information and help

Further information and help is available.

- The Alcohol and Drug Helpline is available 24/7 for confidential advice, support and guidance. Call **0800 787 797** or go to www.alcoholdrughelp.org.nz
- For information, advice, research and resources to help prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm, and help you make better decisions about drinking alcohol visit www.alcohol.org.nz
- Living Sober is an online community that offers tools and information for reducing alcohol use www.livingsober.org.nz
- The Level offers practical advice on reducing alcohol use www.thelevel.org.nz
- Health Navigator New Zealand offers information, advice and self-help resources to help reduce problem drinking <https://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/healthy-living/a/alcohol-and-mental-health/>
- Living Sober is an active online community for anyone wanting help to stop drinking: <https://livingsober.org.nz/getting-help/>
- Information about getting help if you are pregnant and drinking: www.alcohol.org.nz/alcohol-its-effects/alcohol-and-pregnancy/what-you-need-to-know
- Booklet for people thinking about stopping, or wanting to stop drinking or using drugs go to www.matuaraki.org.nz/resources/managing-your-own-withdrawal-a-guide-for-people-trying-to-stop-using-drugs-and-or-alcohol/407
- If you speak Chinese, Korean or Japanese you may find this resource helpful: <https://www.matuaraki.org.nz/resources>

Iti nei, iti nei

Take smalls steps to achieve your goals