

Alcohol Dependence

Guidelines to reduce alcohol-related risk

1. No more than **2** standard drinks on any day to reduce lifetime risk
2. No more than **4** standard drinks on a single occasion to reduce risk from that occasion
3. Children under the age of 15 are at greatest risk of harm
4. Not drinking during pregnancy and breastfeeding is the safest option

Prevalence and symptoms of intoxication

- 16.1% of Australian adults consume >2SD/day on average
- Men are twice as likely to exceed this number than women
- Symptoms of acute intoxication include slurred speech, ataxia, nystagmus, impaired attention and memory, increased talkativeness, increased risk-taking behaviours



Complications of alcohol dependence

- Sudden cessation or reduction in alcohol intake after prolonged periods of heavy use
- Symptoms include autonomic hyperactivity, tremor, insomnia, nausea and vomiting, transient hallucinations, anxiety, psychomotor agitation
- Some people experience withdrawal **seizures**
 - Majority are tonic-clonic and occur within 48hrs of last drink
- Some people experience alcohol withdrawal **delirium** (delirium tremens)
 - Typically occurs 1-5d after last drink
- Over a chronic period of time, patients may develop brain damage that leads to
 - **Wernicke's encephalopathy** – triad of confusion, ataxia and ophthalmoplegia
 - **Korsakoff's syndrome** – permanent and severe memory loss and confabulation

Management of alcohol use disorder

- Acute alcohol withdrawal is managed with **benzodiazepines**, thiamine supplementation and supportive care
- **Psychosocial interventions** are first line management
- Pharmacotherapy is used in conjunction with psychosocial intervention
 - **Acamprosate** and **naltrexone** reduce cravings
 - Disulfiram acts as a deterrent to drinking
 - Baclofen and topiramate may also be used



What does TeamMED India do?



- TeamMED India works with CORD (Chinmaya Organization for Rural Development) based in Himachal Pradesh
- The team works with schools in the area to educate children about commonly abused substances such as alcohol, tobacco and drugs
- Education methods that are used include self-directed learning and reflection by individual students, as well as creating a safe space in the classroom if students wanted to share their stories