



## **COVID-19 - alcohol and other drug use**

NOTE: This page contains general advice and links to official and reputable resources. AODCCC does not provide health or legal advice.

### **What is COVID-19?**

COVID-19 is an illness caused by a newly identified type of coronavirus that can cause a respiratory infection and lead to health problems. It's usually mild and most people recover quickly if they have it, but it can be very serious for people with underlying health conditions, weakened immune systems and older adults.

### **How do people get infected with COVID-19?**

COVID-19 can be spread from person-to-person contact through saliva and body fluids. Spread of the virus can also happen through touching objects or surfaces such as door handles or tables contaminated from coughing, sneezing, or an infected person touching their mouth or face.

It is important that you protect yourself by using good hygiene practices, washing your hands and maintaining a distance of at least 1.5 metres from others.

### **What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

The main symptoms feel like the flu or a bad cold and may include fever, dry cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing and fatigue. Some people may get a runny nose, sore throat, nasal congestion, aches and pains or diarrhoea.

Symptoms can show up 2 to 14 days after exposure to the virus, so although the person may not feel unwell, they can still unknowingly spread the virus. Some people can contract the virus and not feel unwell at all.

Information is available about Coronavirus [translated into multiple languages](#) by Ethnolink.

### **What do I do if I am worried that I, or someone I know might have COVID-19?**

Health Direct has a National Coronavirus Helpline operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week: **1800 020 080**. There is also a [symptom checker](#) that guides you on what to do depending on the symptoms.

There are [COVID-19 testing clinics](#) in metropolitan WA, Bunbury and Broome for the general public with a history of fever in the past few days or an acute respiratory infection (shortness of breath, cough, sore throat).

### **If I use alcohol and other drugs am I at greater risk of health problems from COVID-19?**

If you use alcohol and other drugs, you may be at increased risk of illness from COVID-19. If you regularly smoke tobacco or use drugs that suppress the central nervous system such as alcohol, opiates and volatile substances, your respiratory system may be more vulnerable. You may also be at increased risk of overdose if you have the COVID-19 virus.

### **How can I use alcohol and other drugs more safely during COVID-19?**



For information on ways to use more safely to protect yourself and others, and tips on how to plan ahead in case you are impacted by COVID-19, see the links below:

[COVID-19 and Harm Reduction Information for Consumers](#) – Peer Based Harm Reduction WA

[Safer drug use during the COVID-19 Outbreak](#) - Harm Reduction Coalition

[Coronavirus Information Fact Sheet for Consumers](#) - Penington Institute

### **If I need help, what services are still open?**

Alcohol and other drug services are essential services and continue to operate wherever possible and safe to do so during the COVID-19 pandemic. Services are adapting how they deliver care to ensure that vulnerable individuals, communities and populations are not at greater risk of harm.

If you are in Western Australia and you need support or information in relation to alcohol and other drug-related issues, please contact the [Alcohol and Drug Support Service](#) on (08) 9442 5000 or 1800 198 024 (free for country callers). The service is free, confidential and available 24/7.

If English is not your first language, you can get free translation support through the [Translating and Interpreting Service \(TIS National\)](#) by phoning 131 450.

### **Are support meetings like AA and NA still happening?**

Yes, support meetings are still happening online. See links below:

[Narcotics Anonymous online meetings](#)

[Alcoholics Anonymous online meetings](#)

[SMART Recovery online meetings](#)

### **What do I do if I am required to self-isolate and might have an alcohol dependency?**

If your body is dependent upon alcohol, stopping drinking suddenly can be dangerous and potentially fatal. If you have concerns for yourself or another person, call [Health Direct](#) on **1800 022 222** or [Alcohol and Drug Support Service](#) on **(08) 9442 5000** or **1800 198 024** (free for country callers).

If you are in isolation and have run out of alcohol, ask a friend or family member for help. Some businesses will also home deliver if you need supplies. Bear in mind that there are [temporary restrictions](#) in place for takeaway alcohol.

### **What can I do to look after my mental health and reduce anxiety about COVID-19?**

- Avoid excessive exposure to media coverage of COVID-19, including social media.
- Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly and get plenty of sleep.
- Connect with others - talk to a friend or family member about how you are feeling.
- Spend time doing activities you enjoy.

The following links provide information to support your mental health during COVID-19 pandemic.



[mental wellbeing during the Coronavirus outbreak](#). The [Beyond Blue Support Service](#) offers short term counselling and referrals by phone and webchat on **1300 22 4636**.

[Relationships Australia](#) – continue to provide support services by telephone, video conferencing or online.

[Black Dog Institute](#) provide online support, tools and resources

[Blue Knot Foundation](#) have a helpline **1300 657 380** and online resources including COVID-19 Fact Sheets

### **What support is available for people impacted by domestic and family violence?**

[1800RESPECT](#) is operating during COVID-19 and a list of [safety apps for mobile phones](#) can be found at their website. **inTouch** (Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence) has launched a [COVID-19 information hub](#) for women from migrant and refugee communities experiencing family violence, and for family violence service providers and practitioners.

### **What financial support has been made available for people impacted by COVID-19?**

A **Coronavirus supplement** of \$550 per fortnight, is being paid to Newstart, Youth Allowance, Parenting Payment, Farm Household Allowance and Special Benefit recipients.

**Direct cash payments** of \$750 are being paid to social security, veteran and other income support recipients and eligible concession card holders. The first payment will be made from 31 March 2020 and the second payment will be made from 13 July 2020.

**Economic Justice Australia** has produced a [fact sheet](#) with specific information on how to claim a Centrelink payment during COVID-19.

**Early access to superannuation** may be available to you. Individuals impacted by COVID-19 may be able to access up to \$10,000 of their superannuation in 2019-20, and a further \$10,000 in 2020-21. Bear in mind that withdrawing superannuation now may have a significant impact on the money available to you in retirement. It is best to seek professional financial advice before withdrawing any money.

Key COVID resources for the Alcohol and Other Drug Sector can be found on the links below:

WA Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies

<http://wanada.org.au/item/563-covid-19-response.html>

Peer Based Harm Reduction

<https://harmreductionwa.org/>