



# Signposts

A Handbook on  
Alcohol & Substance  
Misuse

for Parents and  
Young People

PREVENTION & EDUCATION  
SUB-COMMITTEE  
NORTH EAST REGIONAL DRUG  
& ALCOHOL TASK FORCE



North Eastern Regional  
Drug & Alcohol  
Task Force

Cavan ~ Monaghan ~ Louth ~ Meath





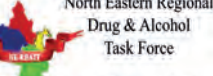
## Introduction

The purpose of this information booklet is to help parents /guardians to discuss alcohol and drugs with young people.

This leaflet has been developed by the Prevention & Education Sub-Committee of the North East Regional Drugs & Alcohol Task Force, one of whose responsibilities is to raise awareness in the area of young people and alcohol/drugs and it does not set out to tell parents and guardians what they must or must not do.

Instead this booklet tries to provide useful information which may be of help to openly discuss the issues with young people. It also signposts parents and guardians to sources of advice and support.

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## Alcohol

Parents and guardians have an important influence on young people and their behaviour. A key guiding idea is that alcohol consumption requires maturity and responsibility. For this reason postponing a first drink to an agreed age has a lot of merit. Latest research suggests delaying teenage drinking for as long as possible is the best option.

A young person's brain will continue to develop into their early twenties so the risk of potential damage and poor decision-making will be reduced if they start drinking at a later age.

In Ireland, drinking patterns differ from, for example, wine producing countries where young people are introduced to alcohol in the home. We also differ in where alcohol is drunk, what we drink and many of our attitudes.

Young people are influenced by family, friends, school and community, social environments, role models, peer groups, media, advertising, special promotions, etc.

### How much is too much?

Most people accept that too much alcohol can be bad for you. But do you know how much is too much?

### What's recommended?

Drinking guidelines have been developed for people over 18 years of age, based on medical advice.

Some bodies such as the Institute of Alcohol Studies and the Royal College of Psychiatrists have noted that safer drinking levels for older people could actually be less than the recommended weekly or daily limits, given that they break alcohol down more slowly than when they were younger.



### Statistic:

4 in 10 women  
and 7 in 10  
men in Ireland  
drink alcohol in a  
harmful fashion.

#### Calorie content of alcoholic beverages:

- Pub measure of spirit (35ml) - 80 calories
- Small glass of wine (100mls) - 80 calories
- A glass of lager/cider (284mls) - 90 calories

#### Men

It is recommended that men drink no more than 2 ½ standard drinks a day maximum. No more than 17 standard drinks per week.

#### Women

It is recommended that women drink no more than 1 ½ standard drinks a day maximum. No more than 11 standard drinks per week.

#### Pregnancy

Drinking alcohol when pregnant can seriously damage the development of the unborn baby.

#### Remember that

- It takes one hour for an adult body to process 1 standard drink.
- For each standard drink over the daily limit, the risk to your health increases.
- It is important to spread the standard drinks throughout the week - you can't "save up" your standard drinks for the weekend or a party.

Over half of all Irish drinkers have a harmful pattern of drinking, that's

- 4 in 10 women who drink
- 7 in 10 men who drink

#### One standard drink is:



A pub measure of spirit  
(35ml)



A small glass of wine  
(100ml)



A glass of lager/cider  
(284ml)



## The effects of alcohol

Many people enjoy a drink without any problems. Binge drinking or drinking heavily over longer periods of time can have very serious consequences. Alcohol misuse not only harms the individual but is damaging to relationships and society in general in terms of violence and crime, accidents and drink driving.

### Short-term effects

The short term risks of alcohol (and other drug use) include risk of injury, loss of possessions, relationship problems, time away from school or work and perhaps trouble with the law.



### Long-term effects

As well as the recognised immediate effects of drinking too much, like nausea/vomiting, binge drinking and prolonged heavy drinking over longer periods of time can result in a range of problems including;

- Brain damage
- Cancers
- Heart & circulation problems
- Liver cirrhosis
- Stomach ulcers/ gastritis
- Inflammation of the pancreas
- High blood pressure

### Mental Health

While people may think alcohol helps them to cope with difficult situations and emotions, to reduce stress or relieve anxiety, alcohol is in fact associated with a range of mental health problems, including depression.

Excessive drinking can also disrupt normal sleeping patterns resulting in insomnia and a lack of restful sleep which can contribute to stress and anxiety.

## Other effects

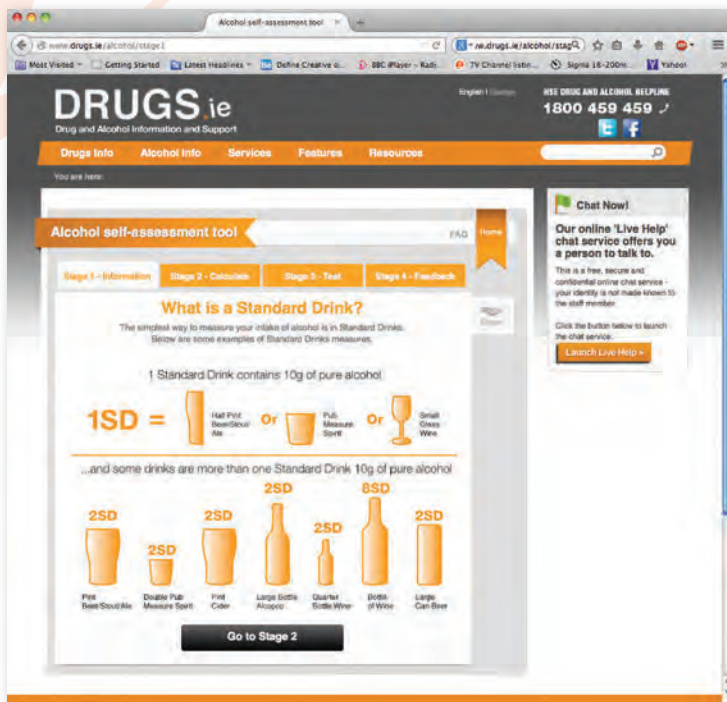
Alcohol affects the parts of your brain that controls judgment, concentration, coordination, behaviour and emotions. If you are binge drinking, you may be at greater risk of:

- becoming a victim of crime, e.g. rape, domestic violence, mugging or assault;
- being involved in antisocial or criminal behaviour, e.g. fights, domestic violence, vandalism or theft;
- having an accident, e.g. a road accident, fall, accident at work or accidental fire;
- losing your job, e.g. repeated absence or poor performance, damaging relationships with family or friends

If you are concerned about your drinking, consult the drinks calculator on the drugs.ie website

Signposts

<http://www.drugs.ie/alcohol/stage1>





## Think about how your own drinking behaviour may impact on your children's attitude to alcohol

Do you ever	Situation	Possible message to your child
Drink to relax or relieve stress?	After a hard day at work the first thing you do is open a bottle of wine or beer.	Could your child see alcohol as an adult way to relieve stress or anxiety and think drinking would be a grown up way of coping with exam pressure or other difficulties in their lives?
Drink to get drunk?	You tend to use alcohol to get drunk and don't pay much attention to recommended daily guidelines	Would your child think alcohol is for getting you drunk and that advice on recommended daily guidelines is meaningless and can just be ignored?
Joke about being drunk?	You enjoy having a joke about things you or others have done while drunk.	Could your child think you approve of people getting drunk and doing silly things? Might they think, if you find it funny when people get drunk, you won't mind too much if they do it?
Ignore your own advice?	You've advised your child about the risks associated with drinking too much, but when it comes to your own drinking you ignore this advice.	Could your child think guidelines and boundaries around drinking aren't important and don't need to be kept to?



## Drugs

A drug is any substance, other than food that alters the way a person thinks, feels or acts. This includes medicinal drugs and also alcohol, tobacco and caffeine.



Only a small percentage of the population take drugs, and while such use may not always lead to problematic use, any amount of drugs can have adverse effects on our mental and physical health. Using drugs often can have unexpected negative consequences because you're never 100% sure what's in the drug and how you will react.

All drugs affect us in ways we can often underestimate. Different people will react differently to different drugs, resulting in individual effects and experiences. The factors that can influence the effect of drugs include:

- the amount and how quickly taken;
- where a drug has been used;
- whether it has been mixed with other drugs or with alcohol;
- mood prior to use;
- general health and body type, gender and age.

### Types of Drugs:

- Depressants (alcohol, benzodiazepines)
- Stimulants (amphetamines, cocaine)
- Opiates / Narcotics (heroin, methadone)
- Hallucinogens (LSD, magic mushrooms)
- Solvents
- Cannabis drugs
- Designer drugs
- Nicotine





## Why do some young people use drugs?

- Curious and want to see what it's like!
- Peer group – friends are doing it!
- Get a buzz and have a good time!
- Boredom or to forget problems!
- Easily available!
- Don't think of the consequences!
- It seems the norm; TV, magazines, pop stars, celebrities, media

 <http://www.drugs.ie>

## Some of the signs and symptoms of drug use are:

### Family:

- Starting arguments, negative attitude, breaking rules, withdrawing from family,
- Secretiveness, selling personal possessions.

### School:

- Decreased interests, negative attitude, drop in grades, many absences, truancy and discipline problems.

### Physical:

- Fatigue, repeated health complaints, red and glazed eyes, lasting cough.

### Emotional:

- Personality change, sudden mood changes, irritability, irresponsible behaviour, low self-esteem, poor judgment, depression and general lack of interest.

### Social problems:

- New friends who make poor decisions and are not interested in school or family activities, problems with the law, changes to less conventional styles in dress and music.



## Tips for Parents/guardians

- ✓ Help build their self esteem
- ✓ Be a positive role-model
- ✓ Talk and spend time with our young people as a family
- ✓ Know our young people's friends
- ✓ Keep them involved in activities
- ✓ Be as honest as we can and it's ok not to have all the answers
- ✓ Talk and Listen
- ✓ Use TV storylines

People who start drinking/taking drugs at a young age are more likely to have an alcohol or drug problem later in life.

Signposts <http://www.fsn.ie>



### Have your answers ready:

- ✓ Prescribed medicines - ok once prescribed but harmful if misused.
- ✓ Cannabis is not a soft drug and is different in medicinal use.
- ✓ Cigarettes - health issues and addiction.
- ✓ Alcohol affects young people differently than older people. Similarly to medicines, doses are different for a young person than an older person as their body is less mature.
- ✓ Alcohol and drugs mixed can sometimes lead to dangerous and some unknown consequences.

### What can help prevent our young people from taking alcohol or drugs?

- ✓ Providing love, support and encouragement, whatever the family make-up!
- ✓ Positive relationship and spending time together.
- ✓ Knowing where our young people are, what they're doing and who they are with.
- ✓ Showing an interest in what they are doing.
- ✓ Give clear and consistent messages about dangers and consequences of alcohol and drugs.

### Young people themselves

- ✓ If they believe that using drugs will have a negative effect on their lives.
- ✓ If they don't use drugs or delay any involvement for as long as possible.
- ✓ Feel good about themselves, and are able to deal with their feelings and emotions.
- ✓ Have friendships with peers who are a positive influence.
- ✓ Are able to ask for help if it's needed.



## Ask yourself these questions:

1. Do I know what's in the drug or what has been added to it?
2. If it goes wrong what will it do to me?
3. If it goes right and I like it, will I become addicted?
4. Would the people I'm with know what to do in an emergency?
5. Do I want to risk a criminal record?

Signposts <http://www.healthpromotion.ie>

## Talking to others about Smoking, Alcohol and Drugs

### DO'S



- ✓ Be clear about what you are trying to achieve by talking.
- ✓ Listen carefully to what the young person has to say.
- ✓ Ask open ended rather than closed questions. These will encourage the young person to talk.
- ✓ Be positive - warnings may be counter-productive.
- ✓ Check your facts - where are you getting your information from?
- ✓ Use a comfortable relaxed setting if possible.

### Don'ts



- ✗ Don't overreact or panic.
- ✗ Don't assume that anything drastic has to be said or done.
- ✗ Don't try and talk in depth to a young person if they are intoxicated.
- ✗ Don't lose sight of your aims when talking to a young person about drugs.
- ✗ Don't be judgmental. Attitudes and values concerning drug use vary a lot between people.
- ✗ Don't sensationalise or add to anxiety by exaggerating. This could hinder communication.



## When someone overdoses, there are a number of warning signs to look out for:

- They look asleep or unconscious
- Their face or lips look pale or blue
- They are having trouble breathing



### What to do if a person overdoses ...

#### 1. If this happens, don't panic

**Check & see if they are unconscious - call their name(s), shake them and shout-**

#### 2. "Are you OK!"

#### 3. If they don't wake up:

- Dial 112 or 999 & ask for ambulance.
- Give your location as accurately as possible.
- Tell the operator what's happening, explain the problem to them.
- Make sure nothing is stuck down their throat – vomit or false teeth.
- Check to see if they are breathing.
- If you know how to do it, give mouth to mouth.
- Put them on their side, in the RECOVERY POSITION.
- Stay with them until the ambulance arrives.
- If you know what they have taken, tell the ambulance crew.

### BE SAFE

DON'T mix your drugs (or don't take at all)





## Recovery Position



1  
Put their left hand by their head  
(as if they were waving)



2  
Put their right arm across their  
chest, so that the back of the hand  
rests against their cheek



3  
Hold their hand in place and lift up  
their knee



4  
Turn the victim on their side by  
pushing down on their knee

## Mental Health Promotion

Having good mental health and emotional wellbeing is important. It isn't just about avoiding mental health problems. It means feeling good about yourself and coping well with the everyday pressures of life. Good mental health is a protective factor in reducing the negative effects of drugs and alcohol.

### Looking after your Mental Health

- Take it one day at a time
- Talk about it and ask for help
- Keep active
- Sleep well
- Stay in touch
- Get advice on money problems
- Alcohol: remember link of alcohol and depression





## Support services

Most people at some time feel worried, stressed or even down about problems in their life. In Ireland people can be slow to ask for help or talk about our problems. Letting someone know how you feel is a good way to start dealing with a problem. If you or someone you know, needs support, someone to talk to or is in a crisis:

Signposts

<http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie>

- Contact your local GP or family doctor.
- Contact your GP out-of-hour-service.
- Go to or contact the Accident and Emergency Department of your nearest hospital.
- Contact the Samaritans 116123 (24 hours)  
or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)
- Website for Samaritans [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)
- Website for young people [www.letsomeoneknow.ie](http://www.letsomeoneknow.ie)
- Headstrong [www.headstrong.ie](http://www.headstrong.ie)

Signposts

For information on entitlements etc, contact Citizens Information for free and confidential service 07 61 07 4000 or go to:  
[www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie)

## HSE Dublin / North East Addiction Services

Meath Drug Outreach & Addiction Counselling Service - Tel: 046 90 76400

North Louth Drug Outreach & Addiction Counselling Service - Tel: 042 939 4000

South Louth Drug Outreach & Addiction Counselling Service - Tel: 041 98 70160

Louth Alcohol Counselling Services,

Drogheda - Tel: 041 98 42368; Dundalk - Tel: 042 93 26156 ; Ardee - 041 6853264

Meath Alcohol Services,

Kells - Tel: 046 92 49038; Navan - Tel: 046 90 71648

Monaghan/Cavan Addiction Services - Tel: 047 72100

**Al-Anon Family & Friends Support Group**

Phone: 01 873 2699

Website: [www.al-anon-ireland.org](http://www.al-anon-ireland.org)

**IBDI - Pastoral Response to Substance Misuse**

Phone: 01-5053044 Mob: 087-7901461

[www.irishbishopsdrugsinitiative.com](http://www.irishbishopsdrugsinitiative.com)

**Narcotics Anonymous (Nationwide)**

Phone: 01 672 8000

Email: [info@na-ireland.org](mailto:info@na-ireland.org)

Website: [www.na-ireland.org](http://www.na-ireland.org)

**North Eastern Regional Drugs Task Force**

(Cavan, Louth, Meath and Monaghan)

Phone: 046 924 8630

Email: [info@nedrugtaskforce.ie](mailto:info@nedrugtaskforce.ie)

Website: [www.nedrugtaskforce.ie](http://www.nedrugtaskforce.ie)

**Meath Community Drug & Alcohol Response, MCDAR**

Phone: 086 4081511 / 087 0933759

Email: [mcdar@eircom.net](mailto:mcdar@eircom.net)

**Louth Community Drug & Alcohol Team**

Phone: 041 980 4957 / 086 7831162

Email: [louise@lcdat.ie](mailto:louise@lcdat.ie)

Website: [www.lcdat.ie](http://www.lcdat.ie)

**Alcoholics Anonymous (Nationwide Service)**

Phone: 01 842 0700

Email: [gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie](mailto:gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie)

Website: [www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie](http://www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie)

**ISPCC Teen-Focus (Louth & Meath)**

Phone: 041 9833406

Website: [www.ispcc.ie](http://www.ispcc.ie)

**North Eastern Family Support Network**

Email: [info@nerfsn.com](mailto:info@nerfsn.com)

Website: [www.nerfsn.com](http://www.nerfsn.com)

**Positive Youth Education (PYE)**

Phone: 042 9330258

Email: [pyeprogrammes@yahoo.com](mailto:pyeprogrammes@yahoo.com)

Website: [www.pye.ie](http://www.pye.ie)

**Cavan/Monaghan Drug Awareness**

Phone: 049 4379160 / 042 966 6983

Email: [info@cdatrust.ie](mailto:info@cdatrust.ie)

Website: [www.cdatrust.ie](http://www.cdatrust.ie)

**Dundalk Simon Community**

Phone: 042 933 9583

Email: [info@dundalksimoncommunity.ie](mailto:info@dundalksimoncommunity.ie)

Website: [www.dundalksimon.ie](http://www.dundalksimon.ie)

**TURAS Counselling Services**

Phone: 042 9338221

Email: [info@turascounselling.ie](mailto:info@turascounselling.ie)

Website: [www.turascounselling.ie](http://www.turascounselling.ie)

**Other useful resources:**

<http://www.drugs.ie/>

<http://alcoholireland.ie/>

<http://irishbishopsdrugsinitiative.com/>

<http://www.gaa.ie/community>

<http://www.paveepoint.ie/>

<http://www.itmtrav.ie/>

<http://www.foroige.ie/>

<http://www.youthworkkireland.ie/>

<http://www.louthcsc.ie/>

<http://www.familysupportmeath.ie>

<http://www.spunout.ie>

<http://www.crimestoppers.ie>

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