

## Alcohol and Pregnancy

If you are pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is the safest choice. There is no 'safe' amount of alcohol use in pregnancy. Alcohol can weaken a baby's inner spirit, mind and health. Alcohol can cause birth defects and developmental and learning disabilities.



## Alcohol Drinking Guidelines

If you are taking medications, or have physical or mental health conditions then you should check with your doctor to see whether it is safe for you to drink alcohol.

For children and young people under 18 years of age, not drinking alcohol is the safest option.

Some risks of drinking alcohol come from alcohol-related injuries such as road trauma, violence, falls, and other accidents.

To reduce these risks, if you are a healthy woman you should not have more than 4 standard drinks on any single occasion.

Other health risks from drinking alcohol build up over your lifetime. This means the more you drink the greater the risk.

**To reduce your risk of alcohol related disease or injury over your lifetime you should not drink more than 4 standard drinks on any one day or 10 standard drinks a week.**

## What is harmful drinking?

**Harmful drinking is when you have more than the recommended daily amount.**

Harmful drinking can damage your health and can lead to alcohol poisoning. Harmful drinking is dangerous because there is an increased risk that you will get drunk or intoxicated.

### Risks of being drunk or intoxicated

When you are drunk or intoxicated you could say things you would not normally say or do things that you would not normally do. Too much alcohol can affect your mind and make you feel really down or sad. It can affect your judgement and you are more likely to do things like start fights, have unsafe sex, drive drunk and break the law.

When you are drunk you cannot look after yourself, your family, or your children properly, and you might neglect them or put them at risk.



## Getting help and information

If you are thinking about reducing your alcohol use you might like some help or information. Or if you are worried about somebody and how their alcohol use is affecting you and your family, perhaps you would like some help regarding them as well.

Sometimes people don't get help because they feel shame talking about how alcohol is affecting them and their families. Aboriginal Alcohol and Other Drug Workers, Aboriginal Health Workers or other health professionals are there to help you. They will not put you down or judge you. They will listen and help you work out what you want to do. They can show you ways to reduce harm, cut down or stop using. They can help you access medical support, rehabilitation services, counselling and support.



It may not be easy reducing your alcohol use but your friends, family and other people in your community can support you to make changes.

## For more information and help

Local Contact

### Alcohol & Drug Support Line

The Alcohol and Drug Support Line can provide information about culturally secure alcohol and drug services in your area. They are a confidential, 24 hour, statewide telephone counselling, information and referral service for anyone concerned about their own or another person's alcohol or other drug use. Call backs are available.

**Ph** 9442 5000 or 1800 198 024 (country callers)

**Em** [alcoholdrugsupport@mhc.wa.gov.au](mailto:alcoholdrugsupport@mhc.wa.gov.au)

**Web** [alcoholdrugsupport.mhc.wa.gov.au](http://alcoholdrugsupport.mhc.wa.gov.au)

### Parent & Family Drug Support Line

Confidential, 24 hour, statewide telephone counselling, information and referral service for anyone concerned about a loved one's alcohol or other drug use. Parent callers can speak to a Parent Peer Volunteer with a lived experience of their own son or daughter's alcohol or other drug use. Call backs are available.

**Ph** 9442 5050 or 1800 653 203 (country callers)

**Em** [alcoholdrugsupport@mhc.wa.gov.au](mailto:alcoholdrugsupport@mhc.wa.gov.au)

**Web** [alcoholdrugsupport.mhc.wa.gov.au](http://alcoholdrugsupport.mhc.wa.gov.au)

Produced by Strong Spirit Strong Mind™

Aboriginal Programs

[www.strongspiritstrongmind.com.au](http://www.strongspiritstrongmind.com.au)



**Mental Health  
Commission**



Brochure design by Nani Creative

The Aboriginal Inner Spirit Model (Ngarlu Assessment Model) was developed by Joseph 'Nipper' Roe, who belonged to the Karajarri and Yawuru people.

Illustrations: Patrick Bayly, Workspace Design.

© Mental Health Commission 2020

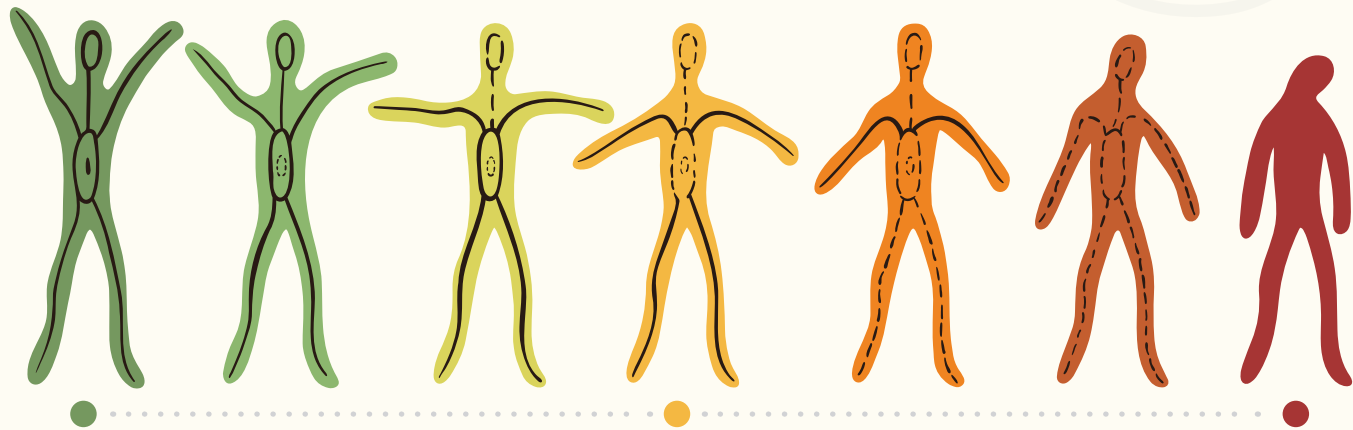


**STRONG SPIRIT  
STRONG MIND**

## What Our Women Need to Know About Alcohol

Aboriginal ways of reducing  
harm from alcohol and other drugs

## Alcohol and other drugs can weaken your inner spirit and your connections to family, community and country



### People who don't use at all

- o Strong Spirit
- o Strong Family
- o Strong Community
- o Strong Country

### People who use a lot

- o Weak Spirit
- o Angry & Worried Family
- o Worried Community
- o OK Country

### People who use all the time

- o No Spirit
- o Sad Family
- o Sad Community
- o No Country

**Our Inner Spirit is the centre of our being and emotions.**

**When our spirit feels strong our mind feels strong.**

**When our spirit feels tangled our mind feels tangled.**

**Strong Inner Spirit is what keeps people healthy and keeps them connected together.**

**Strong Inner Spirit keeps our family strong, our community strong and our country alive.**

**How is alcohol affecting your inner spirit and your connections to family, community and country?**

## What is alcohol?

Alcohol is a depressant which affects the way you think, feel and behave. Alcohol is a very strong drug and it can have toxic effects. Large quantities of alcohol are poisonous.

Beer, wine, spirits, liqueur, port, sherry and homebrew all contain different amounts of alcohol. The more alcohol a drink contains the stronger it will be.

### Approx. One Standard Drink



30ml Nip Spirits



100ml Wine



375ml Mid Strength Beer

## How alcohol works

When you drink alcohol it goes into your bloodstream, it circulates around your body and some goes to your brain.

Alcohol slows down your brain and affects the way it carries messages. It also affects how your brain talks to other parts of your body. At first you might feel relaxed and happy.

At the same time your liver is working really hard to break down the alcohol and clear any toxins out of your body. A healthy liver can break down about one standard drink per hour. If you are drinking faster than your body can get rid of alcohol, you will get increasingly drunk and the alcohol may begin to cause some damage.

## How harmful alcohol use can affect your body

### Brain

Brain damage, memory loss, blackouts, hallucinations, fits, confusion, dementia, mental health problems, depression, anxiety and mood swings

### Nervous System

Tingling, numbness and loss of feeling

### Muscles

Weak, loose muscle tissue

### Breast

Increased risk of breast cancer

### Liver

Damaged and swollen, cirrhosis, hepatitis, cancer

### Kidneys

Reduced function and increased infections

### Colon and Rectum

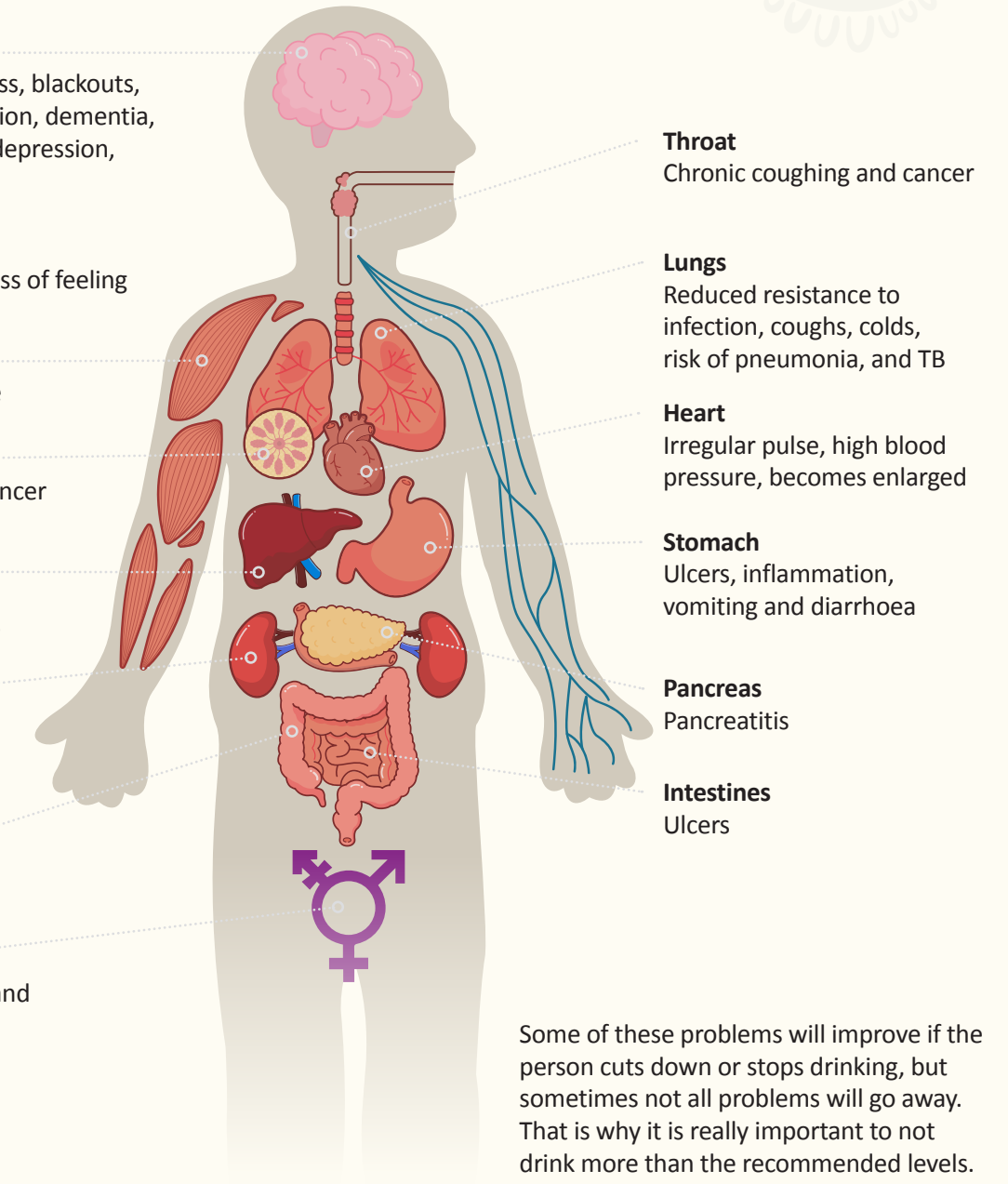
Cancer

### Reproduction

Infertility and risk of STIs and BBVs from unsafe sex

### Baby

Risk of unborn baby



Some of these problems will improve if the person cuts down or stops drinking, but sometimes not all problems will go away. That is why it is really important to not drink more than the recommended levels.