Alcohol is a drug that has significant effects on the body. Binge drinking is very risky and can result in harm to yourself or others. Risks include:

- overdosing on alcohol (sometimes called alcohol poisoning), which can cause death
- being assaulted or getting in a fight
- causing or being in a car accident
- unplanned pregnancy
- shame and embarrassment about your behaviour
- loss of valuable items such as a damaged car or mobile phone
- financial losses through reckless spending while intoxicated
- loss of income through time off work.

Children less than 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking. For young people aged 15 to 17 years, the safest option is to delay drinking for as long as possible.

If you choose not to drink, you are in good company. The majority of young Australians aged 14 to 19 years don’t drink alcohol on a regular basis.

Help and more info:

Alcohol and Drug Information
Service Phone: 1300 13 1340.
Confidential telephone counselling and information available between 8.30am and 10pm every day.


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Playing it safe

If you choose to drink, despite the risks, here are some tips for staying safer and in control:

> Drink no more than the recommended low-risk levels.
> **No more than four standard drinks on a single occasion** – this reduces the risk of alcohol-related injury arising from that occasion.
> **No more than two standard drinks on any day** – this reduces your risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury over a lifetime.

> Have a water or soft drink to quench your thirst before you start drinking alcohol. Tap water is free at places where alcohol is served.

> Set a limit and count your drinks. Remember, one drink is not always one standard drink (e.g. two stubbies of regular beer is about three standard drinks – for more information about standard drink sizes visit www.dassa.sa.gov.au.

> Eat before and while you are drinking. Alcohol is absorbed much more slowly when your stomach is full.

> One drink at a time. Avoid drinking in rounds and topping up drinks, as it becomes difficult to keep track of how much you’ve had to drink.

> Pace yourself. Have a non-alcohol drink as a spacer and take sips not gulps.

> Keep active. Dance, play pool etc – you tend to drink less. Avoid just sitting and drinking. If you are very active, remember to drink lots of water.

> Try low-alcohol alternatives (e.g. light or mid-strength beer).

> Plan safe transport. Have a designated driver, keep enough money to pay for a taxi or use public transport.

> Never mix alcohol with illicit drugs. It can be extremely dangerous. For example combining alcohol with cannabis can greatly increase the negative effects of both drugs and combining alcohol with heroin or sleeping pills can kill you.

> If taking prescription medications, check if their effects can be interfered with by alcohol.

Look after each other:

If someone is drinking and passes out or becomes unable to speak, call an ambulance immediately.

**Dial 000.**

To reduce the risk of an unconscious person vomiting and choking to death, turn them on their side in the safety position, make sure their airways are clear, and do not leave them alone.

If friends choose not to drink they should be supported in this decision.