

Problems with alcohol and drugs

Some people may have problems with drinking too much alcohol or taking drugs. This can:

- affect cancer treatment
- make recovery slower
- increase the risk of other cancers and health problems.

How do I know if I have a problem with alcohol or drugs?

You may have a problem with alcohol or drugs if:

- you feel you cannot manage without it
- you think about it all the time
- other people are concerned about how much you drink or take
- it has started causing you problems with family members, friends or a partner
- it has started causing problems with your health.

NHS guidelines suggest that both men and women should:

- not regularly drink more than 14 units of alcohol in a week
- spread the alcohol units they drink in a week over 3 or more days
- try to have several alcohol-free days every week.

A unit of alcohol is half a pint of ordinary strength beer, lager or cider, one small glass (125ml) of wine, or a single measure (25ml) of spirits.

If you feel you depend on alcohol or drugs, there is support to help you. The first step is to talk to your GP. They will talk through your problems and get you the help you need. They may refer you to local services, or sometimes counselling.

Thinking about stopping can seem difficult, especially when you are also coping with a cancer diagnosis. But there are many things to help you to cope.

Tips for managing problems with alcohol and drugs

- It is important to talk to your GP before you stop drinking alcohol or using drugs. Stopping suddenly can make you unwell.
- Be honest with yourself and your GP about how much you are drinking, or how many drugs you are taking. They need this information to give you the best help.
- Your GP or healthcare team at the hospital can refer you to a local specialist team. They can give you advice and support to help you stop.
- Talk to family or friends about your concerns. They can help support you when you are struggling to cope.
- Try joining support groups, or online forums. You might find talking to people in a similar situation helpful.
- Remember that recovery is usually a gradual process. If you have a set-back, do not be tempted to give up. Set your goal for each day and try to keep to it.

Local resources:

Resource	Contact details

National resources:

Resource	Contact details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcoholics Anonymous • FRANK Information on drugs and getting help • Mind Advice and support for anyone affected by mental health problems • NHS.UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk Tel 0800 917 7650 • www.talktofrank.com Tel 0300 123 6600 • www.mind.org.uk Tel 0300 123 3393 • www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/ www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/drug-addiction-getting-help/

Further information

macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/treating/after-treatment/recovery/lifestyle-and-well-being.html

Our booklets and leaflets are available to order free on be.macmillan.org.uk

- **How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer**
- **Life after cancer treatment**

More information and support

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm, or visit macmillan.org.uk

Deaf or hard of hearing? Call using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app. Speak another language? Telephone interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use.

We produce information in a range of formats and languages. To order these, visit macmillan.org.uk/otherformats or call our support line.

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