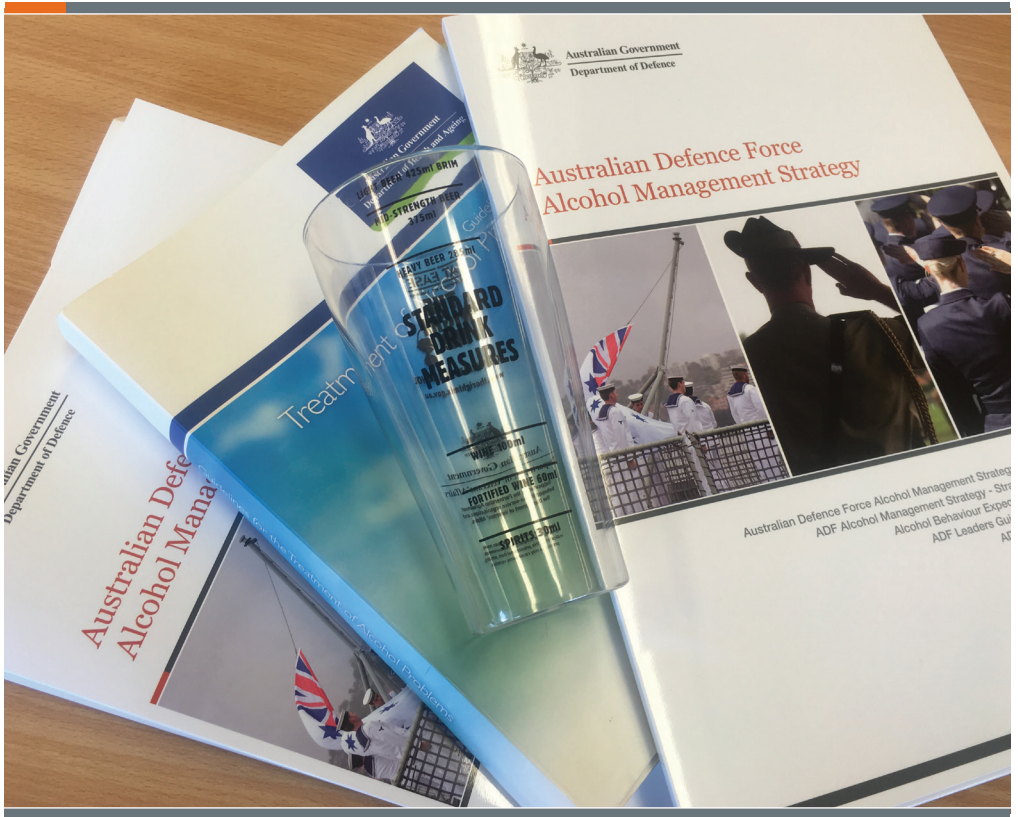




Alcohol

Defence Mental Health & Wellbeing





*'Mental health and wellbeing is the state in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stress of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community'**

Defence's vision is that our people – military and public servants – experience positive mental health and wellbeing. *They are Fit to Fight – Fit to Work – Fit for Life.*

*World Health Organization

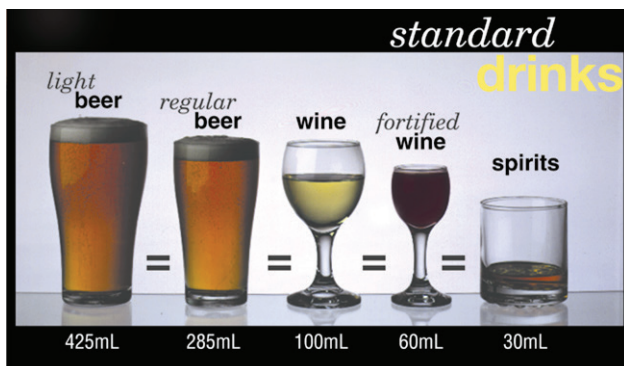
Alcohol and your health

Alcohol is a depressant drug which means it acts to slow down the central nervous system and inhibits many of the brain's functions, affecting almost all the body's cells and systems. Increasing alcohol levels in the blood slows down a person's reflexes and rapidly makes judgement, co-ordination and balance more difficult.

In Australia, alcohol is a significant risk factor for injury, ill health, violence, crime, family breakdown, road accidents, loss of productivity in workplaces, and death. While there is no safe level of drinking, this fact sheet outlines the National Health and Medical Research Council's guidelines to help people make informed decisions about drinking and reducing the risk of harm.

What is a standard drink?

A standard drink contains 10 grams of pure alcohol. There are no common glass sizes used in Australia and it is important to note that drink serving sizes are often more than one standard drink. The label on the alcoholic drink container tells you the number of standard drinks in the container.



Guideline 1: Adults

To reduce the risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury, healthy men and women should drink **no more than 10 standard drinks a week and no more than 4 standard drinks on any one day**. The less you drink, the lower your risk of harm from alcohol.

Guideline 2: Children and people under 18 years of age

To reduce the risk of injury and other harms to health, **children and people under 18 years of age should not drink alcohol**.

The brain continues to develop until around 25 years of age. This means the brain of people under 18 is more sensitive to damage from alcohol. The earlier a child is introduced to alcohol, the more at risk they are of developing problems with alcohol later in life.

Guideline 3: Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding

To prevent harm from alcohol to their unborn child, **women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy should not drink alcohol**. When a woman drinks alcohol during pregnancy, it crosses the placenta and affects the developing baby. No safe level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy has been identified.

For women who are breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is the safest option. If a mother drinks when she is breastfeeding, the alcohol will cross over into the breastmilk and affect the baby.

What is expected of you?

On 12 June 2013, the Chief of the Defence Force endorsed the Alcohol Behaviours Expectations Statement that sets clear standards for alcohol use by the organisation, its leaders and its members. When drinking, anywhere or at anytime, the ADF expects all members to be responsible, safe and respectful.

Practical strategies for reducing potential risks associated with alcohol include:

- have a plan for where you are going, who you will be with and how you will get home
- have a buddy system—look after one another
- set a limit to your drinking time and the amount that you wish to spend on alcohol
- start with water, or a non-alcoholic drink to quench your thirst

- choose light beer or other low-alcohol drinks
- drink slowly and don't top up drinks
- refill your own glass
- count your standard drinks
- have water in between alcoholic drinks
- drink at your own pace
- do not get into 'buying rounds'
- do something else while you drink—have a meal, play a game of pool or cards.

Self reflection

- have you ever thought you drink too much?
- has a friend, relative or doctor ever been concerned about your drinking?
- do you regularly have more than four drinks on any one occasion?
- do you drink to cope with anger, stress and sleeplessness?
- have you tried to cut down or stop drinking without success?

If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, you may like to consider your choices and access additional resources and further support.

Drinking alcohol with other drugs

The effects of drinking and taking other drugs (including over-the-counter or prescribed medications) can be unpredictable and dangerous, and could cause:

- **Alcohol + cannabis:** nausea, vomiting, panic, anxiety and paranoia.
- **Alcohol + energy drinks (with caffeine), ice, speed or ecstasy:** more risky behaviour, places body under great stress, overdose more likely.
- **Alcohol + benzodiazepines:** decreased heart rate, overdose more likely.

Drink Spiking

This is the practice of adding alcohol or other drugs into a person's drink without their knowledge or consent. Drink spiking is illegal. Both alcoholic and non alcoholic drinks can be spiked. Media discussion about drink spiking often mentions strong sedatives such as Rohypnol as the substance that are used to spike drinks. In fact, alcohol is the most commonly used drug to spike drinks. Drink spiking can lead to assault, robbery, sexual assault and adverse health effects from consumption of the spiking agent. If you suspect you have been

the victim of drink spiking, it is important to seek medical assistance and report it to authorities as soon as practicable.

Where to seek help

If you or someone in your workplace is in crisis and you think immediate action is needed, call **Emergency Services 000**, contact your doctor or local mental health crisis service, or go to your local hospital emergency department.

Emergency contact information – 24 hours

If you or someone you know needs help, call:

- Emergency on **000**
- Lifeline on **13 11 14**
- Suicide Call Back Service on **1300 659 467**.

ADF

Contact your local on base Health Centre, Mental Health Professional or the Duty Officer/Officer of the Day for immediate assistance and referrals.

The ADF Health and Wellbeing Portal is an online health information resource tool for ADF members and their families www1.defence.gov.au/adf-members-families/health-well-being

Your chain of command is a primary resource that can provide advice, referral and support.

Military Chaplains are connected to all ships/units/bases around Australia and on Operations. They can provide all-hours support and appropriate referral. To access Defence Chaplaincy support, call **1300 333 362** and ask to speak to the Duty Chaplain from your area and service.

The ADF Mental Health All-hours Support Line (ASL) is a confidential telephone service for ADF members and their families available 24/7 on **1800 628 036** or if calling from overseas **+61 2 9425 3878**.

If you are away from base, or for out-of-hours assistance, you can call **1800 IMSICK (1800 467 425)** to locate the nearest support.

Defence Family Helpline (1800 624 608) The Defence Family Helpline is available 24/7 for ADF Members and their families, and is staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists. Defence Community Organisation website is: www.defence.gov.au/dco

The National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC)

Serving Families of Deployed Australian Defence Personnel.
As part of the Headquarters Joint Operations Command, the National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) provides a 24 hour support, referral and information service for families of Defence personnel deployed on operations and exercises. **1800 801 026** or **+ 61 2 6127 1812**.

Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office (SeMPRO)

SeMPRO offers advice, guidance and support to current and former Defence personnel who have been affected by sexual misconduct, whether the incident is current or historical.

This includes support to ADF cadets, officers and instructors of cadets, APS personnel, commanders, managers, supervisors, support people and families affected by sexual misconduct. **1800 736 776 (1800SeMPRO)**.

Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling (formerly WVCS): is a national mental health service that provides 24-hour free and confidential counselling, group programs and suicide prevention training for current and ex-serving ADF members, and their family. To get support or to find out more, call **1800 011 046** or visit www.OpenArms.gov.au

APS (and Reservists)

Defence Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (including the Reserve Assistance Program – RAP). The EAP provides short term confidential counselling and support for employees and immediate family members (if eligible). It is easily accessible, voluntary and can provide support on a range of personal and work related issues. The Defence EAP can be accessed by calling **1300 687 327**.