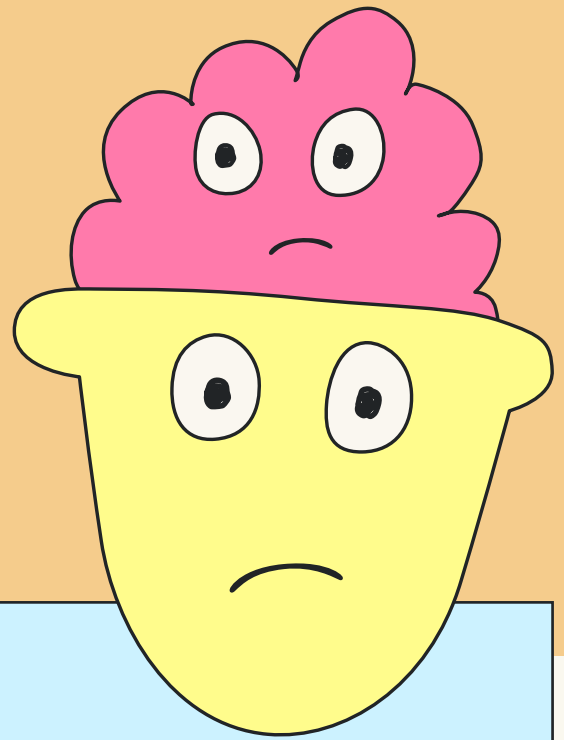


Be nice to Brain.  
Drink less.

# What you need to know about alcohol and depression



## Key facts

- Alcohol has a negative impact on your mental health.
- Depression is a common medical condition that affects thoughts, feelings and behaviours.
- Cutting back or cutting out alcohol can help to relieve depression and improve your mental health.
- There is help and treatment available for depression.

Many things can affect your mental health and wellbeing – alcohol is one factor. The link between alcohol and mental health is complex. How alcohol affects mental health varies from person to person. It can involve how your body responds to alcohol as well as social changes caused by drinking.<sup>1</sup> Some people are more likely to develop mental health concerns or problems with alcohol.<sup>2</sup>

Drinking alcohol can have a negative effect on your mood, thoughts and feelings. Over time it can contribute to the development, or worsening of, mental health conditions including depression. Cutting back or cutting out alcohol can boost your energy, improve your mood and build positive mental health.



## The link between alcohol and depression

Alcohol is a depressant that disrupts the chemical balance in the brain.<sup>3,4,5</sup> It slows down the brain and central nervous system. In the short-term, this can make you feel less inhibited and more relaxed. These effects wear off quickly and can leave you feeling worse than before.

Good brain function relies on a balance of chemicals and processes that help regulate how you think and feel.

Alcohol use can lead to:

- Prolonged feelings of low mood
- Problems with sleep patterns
- Increased feelings of anxiety
- Lack of energy and motivation

If you're unsure whether your alcohol intake is affecting your mental health, talking to your GP is the first step towards finding out.

## What is depression?



Depression affects 1 in 13 Australians every year. Depression has a variety of impacts and in serious cases it can make it difficult to go about your everyday life.

Everyone experiences sadness and low moods from time to time, this is a normal part of life and is often a response to life events. However, if you feel down and sad for no reason at all and these feelings don't resolve over time, this is a sign something more serious might be at play. Signs and symptoms of depression can be different for each individual. They might be physical, emotional or behavioural. They can even impact the way you think and make decisions. If you've been experiencing these symptoms for longer than two weeks, it is important to seek professional support.<sup>6,7</sup>

## Seeking help for depression

If feelings of depression remain for an extended period of time and start to interfere with your everyday life, this is a sign that you might need some support. When feeling this way, it is important to seek help from a health professional such as a GP.<sup>4</sup>

A GP will help you understand what is happening with your depression and mental health more generally. They can also help rule out any physical causes for how you are feeling. When you see a GP, they will spend time understanding how you have been feeling and may recommend some options. Together with your GP, you can create a plan in that may include a variety of treatments that can help manage and relieve depression.

## Tips for managing depression

While the input and support of health professionals is key to treating depression, there are things you can do for yourself now. Some tips to help relieve depressive symptoms and build positive mental health include:

- Cut back or stop drinking alcohol and other drugs
- Regular exercise
- Regular social connection
- Good nutrition
- Good sleep habits
- Meditation
- Mindfulness
- Breathing techniques

For more tips on how to cut back on alcohol, information on alcohol and depression, and a list of support services visit [benicetobrain.org.au](http://benicetobrain.org.au)

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- 1 Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. [What are the effects of alcohol?](#)
  - 2 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. [Mental Health and substance use.](#)
  - 3 Mental Health Foundation. [Alcohol and mental health](#)
  - 4 National Center for Biotechnology Information. Alcohol and Neurotransmitter Interactions. [Alcohol and Neurotransmitter Interactions - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)
  - 5 Alcohol. Think Again. [Effects Of Alcohol On Mental Health Australia | Alcohol Think Again](#)
  - 6 Black Dog Institute. [Depression - Information & Resources - Black Dog Institute | Better Mental Health](#)
  - 7 Alcohol. Think again. [Effects Of Alcohol On Mental Health Australia | Alcohol Think Again](#)