



Healthy Body  
Healthy Mind



Get your health right  
See a GP  
For a physical health check



## Tis the Season to be Merry

by Meagan Shand (BSc.Health Promotion) & Maureen Maher (BSc.Health Promotion)

Will it be a merry or messy season? With the Festive Season comes celebration and social gatherings for some and added stressors, anxiety and even periods of loneliness for others. A time, when a few drinks can easily turn to one too many. The fact is that alcohol is the drug of choice for many Australians, unfortunately, many of us don't know enough about the risks of alcohol or when enough is enough.

## The Risks of Alcohol

- More than 3,000 Australians die every year from alcohol-related accidents, assaults, diseases, or overdoses and about 100,000 people end up in hospital because of alcohol.
- A survey by police concluded that alcohol was involved in more than 70% of assaults, 60% of malicious damage, and 40% of domestic violence.
- People with mental illness are more likely to engage in high risk behaviour such as smoking, alcohol and drug abuse. ( Duty to Care 2001)

Test how much you know about alcohol, take the quiz

<http://www.alcohol.gov.au/internet/alcohol/publishing.nsf/Content/quiz2-text>



HealthRight Champion Kay Merrin and  
Mr. John Hyde (Secretary to the  
Minister of Health)

## When is enough enough?

Due to the different ways that alcohol can affect people, **there is no amount of alcohol that can be said to be safe for everyone.** People choosing to drink must realise that there will always be some risk to their health and social well-being. The more alcohol consumed, the higher the risk. (Department of Health and Ageing)

The Australian Alcohol Guidelines provide a guide to managing alcohol intake based on the Australian Standard Drink measure. To limit health and social risks:

**Men** should drink no more than 4 standard drinks a day, on average  
And never more than 6 standard drinks in one day.

**Women** should drink no more than 2 standard drinks a day, on average.  
And never more than 4 standard drinks in one day.

Everyone should have 1 or 2 alcohol-free days every week.

**If you think you may be a risky drinker, call the Alcohol and Drug Information Service 1800 198 024, or see your GP or mental health clinician.**



1.8  
180ml  
Average  
restaurant  
Serve of  
Wine 12%  
Alc./Vol



1.5  
375ml  
Full Strength Beer  
4.9% Alc./Vol



1.5  
375ml  
Pre-mix Spirits  
5% Alc./Vol

[www.healthright.org.au](http://www.healthright.org.au)



Get your health right  
See a GP  
For a physical health check

## Ask for help

HealthRight Champion Kay Merrin knows well the challenges of controlling alcohol intake when you are feeling vulnerable. After living with depression over many years, Kay succumbed to episodes of binge drinking in an effort to feel better, but found things only got worse.

“Crunch time came when I lost my job because of my drinking” says Kay “Once I sought help, it was a long journey to recovery, but I have my life back on track now, and am in control of my drinking”.

Getting sober has allowed Kay to pursue her passion for art and design. Now an accomplished artist, Kay says getting help from her GP and psychologist was an important part of tackling the problem.

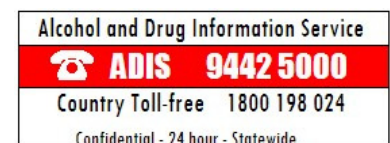
“My message is to ask for help” says Kay “Once you are aware of the problem, see your doctor or just talk to someone. Remember you’re not alone”.

Managing drinking can be a challenge, but many people who live with mental illness have proven that with the right support and information they can drink safe and feel more in control of their lives.

## Ten Tips for safe drinking during the festive season

Whether you feel more like reaching for a drink or have increased opportunities to drink, here are some tips to see you through the festive season with your health intact.

1. Avoid topping drinks up: you may lose count of how many you have had.
2. Try to alternate water or a non-alcoholic alternative with your alcoholic drinks, or try a non-alcoholic cocktail for a refreshing change.
3. Learn how to say no and encourage your friends to be supportive. Nominate yourself as the designated driver if you wish to avoid alcohol.
4. Remember that some beverages will contain more than one standard drink: take this into account when calculating your intake for the evening, particularly if you are driving. ( See Standard drink measures above)
5. Try to eat a substantial meal to increase your tolerance if you are planning on drinking. Avoid eating too many salty party snack foods which will make you thirsty and drink more quickly.
6. Switch to low alcohol beers
7. Keep count of your drinks and stop at the Alcohol Guidelines limits ( See above)
8. **Try not to drink by yourself, or when you are feeling down or anxious.**
9. **Don't keep alcohol at your house.**
10. If you are having problems saying no to alcohol, ask for help.



## Links & References

Alcohol Guidelines: [www.alcohol.gov.au/internet/alcohol/publishing.nsf/Content/guidelines](http://www.alcohol.gov.au/internet/alcohol/publishing.nsf/Content/guidelines)

Alcohol and Drug Information Service : <http://www.dao.health.wa.gov.au/Default.aspx?tabid=69>

Turning Point: Counselling Online [www.counsellingonline.org.au/en](http://www.counsellingonline.org.au/en)

Festive Season Tips: <http://www.mydr.com.au/default.asp?article=2593>

Find a GP: [www.adgp.com.au/site/index.cfm?module=DIVISION&state\\_code=WA](http://www.adgp.com.au/site/index.cfm?module=DIVISION&state_code=WA)

[www.healthright.org.au](http://www.healthright.org.au)

