



ALCOHOL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Alcohol

Alcohol is a depressant that can affect your feelings, thoughts and behaviour. At low doses it can make you feel less anxious and more confident.

It will reduce the activity of your nervous system, reducing your anxiety. But these effects can wear off and leave behind less positive feelings such as anger, low mood or anxiety, regardless of your original mood. The issues that caused the anxiety are still there unaddressed. Over time you may need more alcohol to achieve the same reductions in anxiety which could lead to dependency.

Alcohol interferes with your brain's processing so you can struggle to manage emotions and behaviours, leading to unintended consequences.

Long term alcohol use depletes neurotransmitters which we need to avoid feelings of anxiety and low mood. If you already have symptoms of depression, reducing the amount of alcohol you drink should help. Alcohol can make depression worse and you shouldn't drink if you are taking antidepressants.

If you are having any thoughts of harming yourself, drinking alcohol is a real risk. You may be less able to control your emotions and act impulsively.



Alcohol and sleep

Although alcohol can make it easier to fall asleep, it actually disrupts your sleep patterns. Even small amounts of alcohol can result in disturbed sleep. This is because having a drink means you spend less time in more restorative REM sleep. REM sleep is also felt to play a role in memory storage, so the less you get, the less clear memories you will have and so a potential impact on studying. Fatigue caused by sleep disruption added to the depressant function of alcohol can contribute to low mood.

What to do

- If you feel you need support with your mental health please contact Wellbeing advice and guidance on 0151 795 1000, advice@liverpool.ac.uk.well
- Well being support including managing alcohol consumption and emotional health is available through the My Healthy Advantage App
- Avoid situations where drinking might be central and you would be tempted to drink
- Find alternative ways of socialising with friends. Check out www.joinclubsoda.com – which can help you become more mindful about drinking and has more tips on socialising sober
- Try other ways to manage feelings of anxiety like exercise, relaxation, meditation, reading, games
- Involve friends or family in the changes you are trying to make, they can be a source of support and company

Written and developed in collaboration with The Counselling Service and Sport Liverpool

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Sources of help at the university:
The Counselling Service
Well Being Advice and Guidance
Brownlow Student Practice

liverpool.ac.uk/sports