



Information for Patients

# ALCOHOL AND SLEEP



[www.snoreaustalia.com.au](http://www.snoreaustalia.com.au)

Administration Centre: 161 Nerang Street Southport QLD 4215

Free Call: 1800 076 673 Phone: 07 5557 0055

Fax: (07) 5571 0682

Email: [snore@snoreaustalia.com.au](mailto:snore@snoreaustalia.com.au)

Alcohol is a drug that is socially acceptable and widely consumed in a variety of settings. Once consumed it reaches a peak concentration in about 30-45 minutes and takes approximately one hour to metabolise one standard drink. Significantly though, the community's knowledge of the effects of alcohol and what constitutes a safe amount to consume is widely unknown. Click on the following links for further information.

## Effects

**Mental Health** – Alcohol consumption may worsen the effects of anxiety, depression and schizophrenia or trigger the onset of a mental health episode for at-risk individuals.

**Medications** – Alcohol can interact with a wide variety of medications, including medications used to stabilise major depression or epilepsy.

**Cardiovascular disease** – Through complex interactions, alcohol can raise blood pressure and increase the risk of cardiac dysrhythmias, some types of cardiac failure, haemorrhagic stroke and other circulatory problems. Low consumption of alcohol of the order of one-half of a standard drink per day can have cardio-protective effects, resulting in an increase in high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (good cholesterol) and reducing plaque-accumulations in arteries.

**Cancer** – Alcohol is likely to have a carcinogenic effect on people, increasing the risk of liver, breast, gastrointestinal and oral cavity cancers.

**Malnutrition** – Alcohol consumption is linked to folate deficiency, Vitamin A depletion and pellagra.

**Prenatal Effects** – Consumption of one to three standard drinks daily during pregnancy increases the risk of alcohol dependence occurring in adolescence and can result in the child developing a serious condition known as Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

**Liver Disease** – Alcohol consumption is the most common cause of cirrhosis of the liver. Its damaging effects are exacerbated by the presence of hepatitis B or C, resulting in an increased risk of cirrhosis.

**Long-term Cognitive Impairment** – Chronic alcohol consumption over long periods exhibits negative structural and metabolic brain changes that increase the risk of dementia.

**Sleep Disorders** – While alcohol at night causes an initial sedating effect, it leads to increased arousals and wakefulness several hours after consumption. Sleep disruptions can also be exacerbated by airway obstruction (obstructive sleep apnoea) resulting from alcohol's muscle relaxing effects.

**Sexual Dysfunction** – Alcohol use can cause or exacerbate sexual problems in males and females.

## Recommended Drinking Guidelines

Men and women are recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) to consume not more than two standard drinks per day.

## During Pregnancy and when Breastfeeding

- As no safe level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy has been established, it is recommended that pregnant women abstain from alcohol
- Breast-feeding women are advised not to drink alcohol, however if they chose to do so, the limit should be 2 standard drinks per day.