

Managing Safe Alcohol Use during COVID-19



Supporting our wellness during COVID-19

This fact sheet is part of Thunderbird Partnership Foundation's commitment to provide culturally-grounded and strength-based supports for First Nations people during COVID-19. These resources can provide guidance as our communities navigate the current global health crisis, while continuing to face existing health challenges, including substance use and mental health issues.

During these challenging times it may be tempting to find comfort in alcohol.

It's important during these times to remember our connection to culture and that we have a PURPOSE in life. It's important to remember that our body is a vessel for our spirit that needs to be protected from toxins, such as alcohol. Alcohol and other drugs can impair the work of our spirit.

Persons who experience wellness have hope, know where they belong in this world, and understand that their life has meaning and that they have a unique and specific purpose in life. (FNMWC, 2015)

SAFER DRINKING DURING COVID-19

- Know how much you drink regularly.
- Spread drinks out to reduce bingeing and withdrawal.
- Slowly reduce the amount of drinks each day, by no more than one or two drinks a day.
- Chose beverages with less alcohol content, ie. beer vs. wine or wine vs. spirits.
- Take a break from drinking after slowly reducing your intake.
- If you drink heavily, reducing too quickly or quitting can be dangerous. Consider a prescription to relieve withdrawal.

MANAGING ALCOHOL USE

- Have someone you trust control your alcohol supply.
- If you want to reduce alcohol use, make a goal by thinking about how much you drink now and where you want to be.
- Pace your drinks.
 - Set aside how much is needed to be comfortable for the day.
 - Keep a schedule; keep track of each drink.
 - Slow down if getting drunk quickly or drinking more than usual.
- Dilute the drinks with water or juice or alternate drinks with water or juice.
- Do not share drinks or glasses to avoid spreading COVID-19.

WAYS TO REDUCE RISK

- Include First Nation models of handling substance use issues and healing. (HOS, 2011)
- Respect inter-generational trauma.
- Avoid prohibition of alcohol, as it can lead to the use of other, potentially more harmful substances.
- Accept that people will continue to use alcohol and other drugs.
- Understand that violence can occur with or without alcohol.

Tips for brief interventions for alcohol misuse

- Be aware, listen and have empathy.
- Have a general awareness of alcohol use.
- Accept reasons for alcohol use without judgement.
- Know COVID-19 risks.
- Plan to manage alcohol use during COVID-19.
- Avoid requiring a long-term commitment, i.e. reducing alcohol use during COVID-19, or moving toward abstinence.
- Respect the right of individuals to plan their path to recovery.

REFERENCES

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