

Alcohol Use and Psychosis

We don't completely understand the relationship between alcohol and psychosis, but we know that alcohol use can impact psychosis

General Risks of Using Alcohol

- Alcohol has been shown to increase anxiety, depression, and stress over time. These stressors can put one at a higher risk of psychosis
- Combining alcohol with medications can cause increased intoxication and may increase health risks
- Some people report that alcohol use contributes to psychotic symptoms
- In general, alcohol use is associated with poorer health. Health risks go up the more alcohol you consume

Risks of Heavy/Frequent Alcohol Use

- Heavy alcohol use (7 or more drinks per week) is associated with lower functioning and a higher risk of dying early
- Alcohol withdrawal (stopping heavy use suddenly) can be fatal
- Psychotic symptoms can occur during periods of alcohol withdrawal, such as hallucinations
- Alcohol use may increase the risk of having episodes of psychotic symptoms and can make it harder to cope with psychotic symptoms



Strategies for Reducing Risk

Health Canada Recommendations

Health Canada recommends no more than 2 standard drinks a week to avoid the risks associated with alcohol use. A standard drink is a 12 ounce bottle of beer or cider, a 5 oz glass of wine, or a 1.5 oz shot glass of liquor. Having 3-6 drinks per week moderately increases the health risks. Having 7 or more drinks per week significantly increases the health risks.

Avoid Binge Drinking

Rather than opening another drink right away, try waiting a half hour in-between, or follow it up with a non-alcoholic beverage.

Adapt your social activities to meet your goals

Seek social activities that don't involve alcohol. Find friends who want to go hiking, go to a board game cafe, or grab a coffee.



Seeking Support

- Talk to your support network about your alcohol use. The more informed they are, the better equipped they are to support you.
- Take note if you are using alcohol to cope with mental health concerns, like anxiety, depression, or psychosis
- Talk with your healthcare team. They can recommend healthier coping skills.

Getting More Information

- Alcohol and Drug Information Referral Service provides information and referrals. Call 1-800-663-1441
- LifeRing provides anonymous, judgement-free peer support. Both virtual and in-person options are available. <https://liferingcanada.org>

Ask About Local Resources

Communicate your goals with your care coordinator and they will match you with the resources you are looking for.

Looking for a culturally-specific referral? No problem, just ask!