

# Our Futures – Year 8

## Alcohol: Lesson 6

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### Parent summary

Alcohol: Lesson 6

Drinking too much alcohol can result in many serious medical emergencies, such as fitting, losing consciousness, going into a coma and death. This can occur in many ways:

- Alcohol is a depressant, which means it slows down the brain and nervous system. If a person drinks too much alcohol, the brain and nervous system can slow to such an extent that the heart and breathing stop, resulting in the person dying. This usually happens after someone has become unconscious.
- If a person vomits while unconscious, they may end up choking on their vomit.
- Alcohol may react with another drug a person has taken leading to the person dying.

### How to prevent an alcohol-related medical emergency

The following are tips on how to stay safe if adolescents choose to drink alcohol.

- The safest thing is not to drink alcohol to get really drunk or “trashed”.

However,

- If they are with a group of people who have decided they are going to drink lots of alcohol, at least **one or more people in that group should not drink alcohol**. That way, there is always someone to protect their friends and keep things safe.
- If they are aware of a friend who is drinking too much alcohol, they should **either move them away from the alcohol or discourage them from drinking**. Emphasise to your child that some people become aggressive when they are drunk and their own safety should be a priority i.e. if they think they could be harmed, they should leave the intoxicated person alone.
- If they are drunk and feeling sick they should **tell one of their friends**, so that someone can look after them or keep an eye on them.
- If their friend is drunk and reports feeling sick, then they **should not leave that person alone until the alcohol has worn off**, as there is a risk that they may pass out and choke on their vomit. They may need to place their friend in the recovery position and call for medical help if required. Staying by a friend's side includes going to the bathroom or outside with them and never leaving their friend to “sleep off the alcohol”. When people feel nauseous they often want to be alone for fear that they

may embarrass themselves by vomiting. No matter how insistent the person is, they should never be left alone. It may be the difference between life and death.

- They should **not mix any other drugs with alcohol**. Some combinations can cause serious problems.
- If they do decide to mix drugs, they **should tell a friend what they have taken**. That way, if there is a medical emergency, someone can accurately inform the relevant health professional.

### **How to know when to call an ambulance or seek medical attention?**

Drinking too much alcohol can lead to alcohol poisoning which is a serious medical emergency. If any one of the following signs of alcohol poisoning is present, they should treat it as a medical emergency and seek medical help immediately (call “000”).

- The person is unconscious and can't be awakened by pinching, prodding or shouting.
- The skin is cold, clammy, pale and bluish or purplish, indicating the person is not getting enough oxygen.
- The person is vomiting without waking up.
- The person is breathing very slowly; if there are more than 10 seconds between each breath.

### **How to help the person before an ambulance arrives?**

Even before calling the ambulance, it is important to place the person in the recovery position to prevent them from choking on their vomit. Ideally, if there is more than one person present, one person can call the ambulance, while the other person puts the unwell person in the recovery position.

### **Calling for an ambulance**

The prospect of calling an ambulance can be daunting, therefore, it's important to educate your child on what to expect if they call “000”. The most important aspect to reinforce is that the people on the other end of the phone are trained to take their call and will understand if they are upset or panicking.

When they call “000” they will first reach an operator who will ask them if they want “ambulance”, “fire” or “police”. In the case of a medical emergency, they need to ask for the “ambulance”. They will then be put through to an ambulance operator who will ask them several questions. It is important to stress to them that they must say they believe the person is suffering from alcohol poisoning, because they have noticed any one of the four signs of alcohol poisoning mentioned above.

The process the operator takes is covered in detail in Activity 1.

### **Recovery position**

**To put a person in the recovery position you take the following steps:**

1. Kneel beside the person.
2. Straighten their arms and legs.
3. Fold the arm closest to you over their chest.

4. Place the other arm at right angles to their body.

5. Get the leg closest to you and bend the knee.

6. While supporting the person's head and neck, gently take the bent knee closest to you and very gently roll the person away from you.

Adjust the upper leg, so both the hip and knee are bent at right angles

Basically, check the person is steady and cannot roll.

7. Tilt the head back and make sure the airways are clear and open.

**Contact numbers for adolescents if they are concerned about their own or a family members alcohol consumption.**

#### **Online services**

##### **eheadspace**

<https://www.eheadspace.org.au/>

eheadspace is a confidential, free and secure space where young people can chat, email or speak on the phone with a mental health professional.

##### **ReachOut**

<http://au.reachout.com>

ReachOut is an anonymous service, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

#### **Telephone services**

##### **Kids Helpline**

Ph: 1800 55 1800

Kids Helpline is a phone line that provides a free, anonymous and confidential service.

##### **Lifeline**

Ph: 13 11 14

Lifeline is a crisis support line, available to people of all ages, 24 hours a day.

#### **Counselling services**

1. **School Counsellor at your school**
2. **Local Adolescent Mental Health Team**

Your child can find their closest local mental health service using the White Pages. To do this, they can go to <https://www.whitepages.com.au/>, select 'Business & Gov' and then enter 'Community Health Centre' and their postcode.

Although adolescents may be concerned about contacting a mental health service, they should be reassured that the people who work in these centres, work there because they enjoy working with younger people and are trained to help them with any issue.

No issue is too small or too large! Sometimes just talking to someone can help. The people on the other end of the phone can also provide them with information about other services, which would be helpful.

### **Useful Resources**

This reference list is designed to include references that are easy to access and read. They are provided as additional resources for your interest.

#### **For information on calling “000”:**

Healthdirect Australia. Calling triple zero (000).

<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/calling-triple-zero>

#### **For information on the recovery position:**

St John Ambulance. First aid fact sheet: Recovery Position

[https://stjohn.org.au/assets/uploads/fact%20sheets/english/Fact%20sheets\\_recovery%20position.pdf](https://stjohn.org.au/assets/uploads/fact%20sheets/english/Fact%20sheets_recovery%20position.pdf)

Positive Choices. How to put someone in the recovery position.

<https://positivechoices.org.au/teachers/how-to-put-someone-in-the-recovery-position>

#### **For an online movie tutorial of the recovery position”**

Training Aid Australia. (2012). CPR – Recovery Position.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E02g1OK8l68>

#### **For information about alcohol poisoning:**

DrinkWise. Alcohol poisoning: when drinking turns toxic.

<https://drinkwise.org.au/drinking-and-you/alcohol-poisoning-when-drinking-turns-toxic/#>

#### **For general information about alcohol tailored to Parents/Teachers:**

Positive Choices. Alcohol: Detailed Resource (for Parents/Teachers).

<https://positivechoices.org.au/documents/ArhqqWfklz/alcohol-detailed-resource-for-parentsteachers/>