

# Groundswell

Out of homelessness



## CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

### Alcohol advice

**COVID-19 symptoms** are a high temperature; a new, continuous cough and loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

People who **drink heavily** and have **weakened immune systems** or **underlying health issues** can be **more vulnerable** to the effects of this virus.

**What can you do to protect yourself and others?** Read this guide to find out.



**Version 2:** The information in this document is correct as of the **19/05/2020**.

### Important information – appointments, pharmacies and prescriptions

- **Medical appointments:** GP and hospital appointments are now mostly being arranged as either a **phone or video call**.
- **Visits to the pharmacy:** Going to the pharmacy frequently could increase your risk of catching or spreading COVID-19, they are likely to be busy with long queues.
- **I can't or don't want to go out to my pharmacy:** contact the service you use or speak to your GP, they should try to make arrangements. Your prescriber may agree for someone else to collect your medication, they will have a specific process to approve this.
- **If you are feeling unwell and cannot get medication:** Let someone know as soon as possible - get a friend or family member to call if you need to. If it is more urgent call NHS 111 who will discuss your symptoms (please note they will be busier than usual) or in an emergency only call 999.

### Getting support

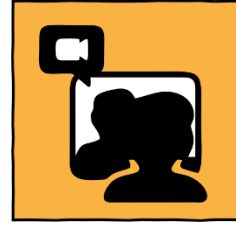
- **Ask a support worker, staff member or outreach worker** for advice.
- **Contact your GP**, they may offer you support at the practice or refer you to your local alcohol service.
- **Be honest about your alcohol usage and needs** – as this information is important to keep you safe and well
- There are **lots of online groups, forums and phone numbers** to call if you need support. Some examples are:
  - **We Are With You:**  
[www.wearewithyou.org.uk/help-and-advice/](http://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/help-and-advice/)
  - **Smart Recovery:**  
[www.smartrecovery.org.uk/online-meetings/](http://www.smartrecovery.org.uk/online-meetings/)
  - **Alcoholics Anonymous:** 0800 9177 650



If you need someone to speak to urgently call Samaritans on **116 123** or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)



## Staying safe and minimising harm during COVID-19



### Mental health, physical health and COVID-19

- Being alcohol dependent or in recovery is likely to be difficult at this time
- Try to **look after your physical and mental health** – keep to a regular **sleeping pattern**, find a daily **routine**, drink water, eat well, do some exercise and try to **talk to friends or family** (phone/online)
- If you are on prescribed medication keep taking this as instructed

### Alcohol and sleep

- Alcohol might help you to fall asleep but the sleep that you have will not be as restful

### Drugs and alcohol

- **Mixing alcohol and drugs is dangerous**, especially if you are taking opiates

### Managing supplies

- Try to **ration your supply** and not drink more than you normally would
- Try to space your drinking out
- **Do not consume alcohol-based products** that are not designed for human consumption (e.g. hand sanitiser or cleaning products). Consuming these can kill or significantly damage your health.

### Hygiene

- **Don't share** bottles, cans, cups or cigarettes/dogends with other people
- **Wipe down** bottles and cans with alcohol-based cleansers (a minimum 60% alcohol concentration kills the COVID-19 virus). If you don't have cleaning products ask staff (e.g. support or outreach worker), they may be able to give you some.
- **Wash your hands** with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds before and after you come into contact with people, handle money and touch packaging.

### Keeping track of your drinking

- Keeping track of your drinking will **help you monitor if you are drinking more or less**. This information will also help health professionals and support workers to give you the support you need
- If you are drinking from a glass measure out your drinks in the same glass each time

### If you want to reduce/stop drinking

- If you want to stop drinking it is important you **seek the advice of a professional** first – it can be dangerous to stop immediately
- Try to **write down how much you are drinking** as this information will be useful to your support worker.

### On a reduction plan

- If you are on reduction plan contact a health professional or addiction advisor and ask them about the best approach for you during COVID-19

### Withdrawal

- The symptoms of COVID-19 can be similar to those of alcohol withdrawal (e.g. fever)
- If you have more severe symptoms like confusion, seizures and racing heart call 999 immediately
- Getting supplies may be more difficult which could cause **involuntary withdrawal**
- If you can, have a **backup plan** and make sure you have all the necessary medications, food, drinks and support systems in place – **seek the advice of a professional**.