

# 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 3:** The information in this document is correct as of the **16/10/2020**.

### Important information – appointments, pharmacies and prescriptions

- **Medical appointments:** GP and hospital appointments are now mostly being arranged as either a **phone or video call**. However, if the GP practice feel a face to face appointment is needed, this can be arranged in some cases.
- **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 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

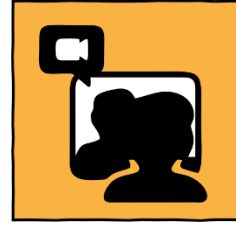
- **Ask a support worker, staff member or outreach worker** for advice.
- **Contact your GP**, they may offer you support at the practice or refer you to your local alcohol service.
- **Be honest about your alcohol usage and needs** – as this information is important to keep you safe and well
- There 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**.