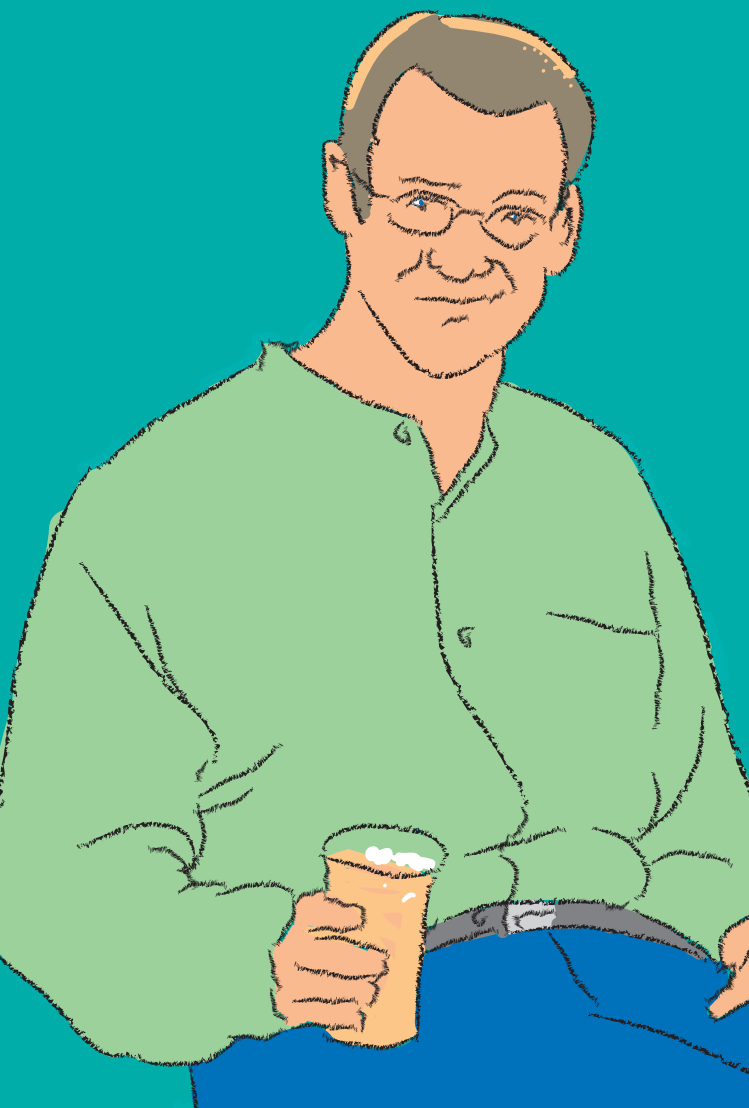




# Alcohol, Anxiety and Depression



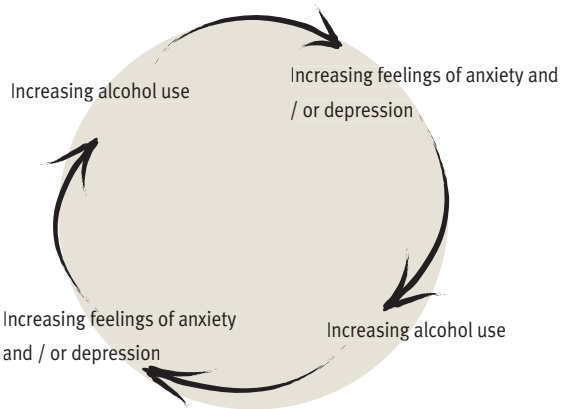
# Anxiety, Depression and Alcohol: Why is it important to seek help?

Anxiety, depression and alcohol problems have a complex relationship where each can make the other worse. These problems are common, and can occur together for many people of all ages and from all walks of life. Anxiety, depression and alcohol problems can vary widely in form and severity. In many cases, they can be resolved with a combination of professional help and support from family and friends. Self-help groups are also highly effective.

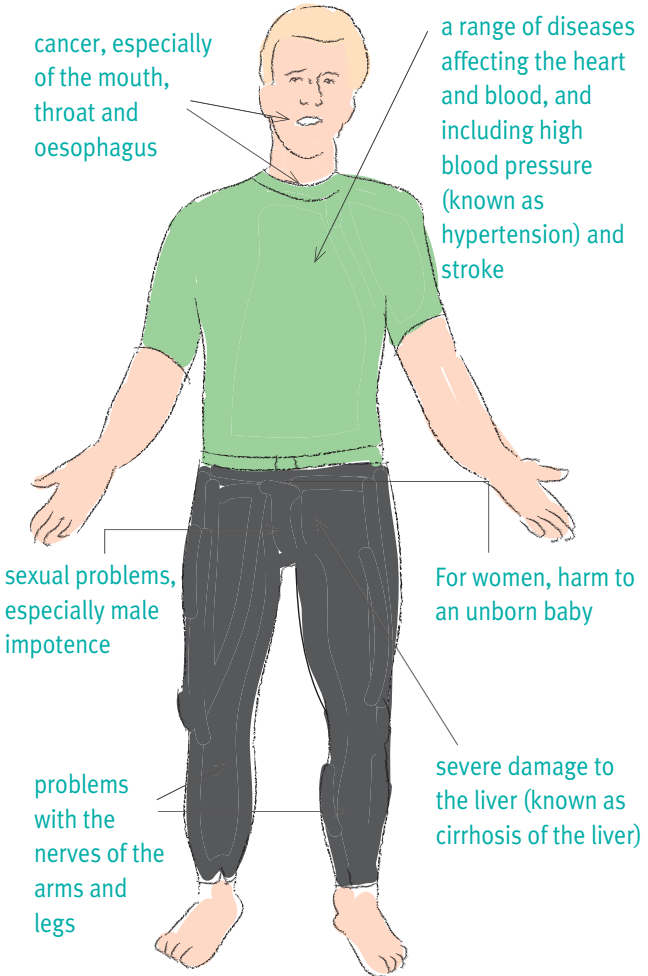
Sometimes people use alcohol to make themselves feel better. At first, alcohol may seem to help with feelings of sadness, anxiety or stress. However, long-term drinking soon makes these feelings worse.

This is because long-term alcohol misuse actually causes depression, and makes it harder for your brain to cope with problems. Long-term alcohol misuse can also lead to relationship breakdown, social isolation, job loss and money problems.

These effects can lead people to drinking more in the hope that it will help them deal with problems, causing a cycle of increasing feelings of anxiety and/or depression and heavy drinking to cope.



Alcohol, anxiety, and depression problems can also affect your physical health. Long term physical health consequences from regularly drinking too much include:



Alcohol can also reduce the effectiveness of medications and impair your ability to drive or operate machinery.

## Why see a GP?

About 85% of people in Australia see a GP each year. Over 10 million consultations are for mental health related problems, and up to 1/3 of adults seen by GPs are drinking at “at risk” levels. GPs are best placed to first identify and help people with alcohol, anxiety and depression problems.

You and your GP can identify how these problems go together and work out straightforward things to do. The first step is to find a GP you feel comfortable with. You can also discuss with your GP options for involving family, partners or other people with your care. The best approach is to work with your GP to develop a list of things you can do to improve your health and prevent setbacks.

It might take several consultations for you and your GP to sort out your problems. Be prepared to make further appointments. If cost is a problem discuss this with your GP.

Where extra professional help is needed, you can ask your GP to help you find it. Your GP can work with others to coordinate your overall care.

