

ALCOHOL

Street names: booze, dop, juice.

What is Alcohol?

- It is a depressant that reduces the activity of the central nervous system and brain. Alcoholic drinks vary with percentage of alcohol content.
- Alcohol abuse is when someone drinks alcohol every day and drinks so much that it changes their health, personal relationships and behaviour.
- The longer someone drinks alcohol and the more they drink the more damage it does to the body and mind. People with alcohol dependency or who abuse alcohol cannot control how much they drink, or how often, even if it causes serious problems at home and at work.

Alcohol abuse can lead to:

- Domestic violence, abuse, relationship problems and loss of jobs
- Unsafe sexual practices, which increase the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS
- Sexual functional problems, disorientation and loss of motor skills
- Foetal Alcohol Syndrome in the babies of women who drink alcohol during pregnancy
- Road accidents
- Poor work performance and or absenteeism at work

Some signs and symptoms of alcohol abuse include:

- Not being able to control how much to drink.
- Not being able to stop drinking once started.
- Not being able to remember where they were or what they did.
- Not being interested in things they used to enjoy.
- Keeping or hiding alcohol in strange places.
- Drinking very fast to get drunk quickly.
- Getting into trouble with police (bar fights, domestic violence as well as drinking and driving).
- Having money problems and unable to budget.
- Needing more and more alcohol to escape one's problems.
- Feeling sick, sweating and shaking when not drinking.

Self-help

- Commit to stop drinking.
- Get rid of temptation: Do not go to the shebeens or taverns where you can get alcohol.
- Tell people: Tell your friends and family that you are not drinking anymore and ask them to support you.
- Stay away from bad influences: Keep away from people who do not support you. Your true friends will understand and help you to stop drinking.
- Stay safe: If you have been drinking for a long time or drink a lot, stopping suddenly can make you sick, go to your nearest clinic or see a doctor.
- Take care of yourself: Eat healthy food, exercise and get enough sleep.
- Find new hobbies and do things you enjoy - like playing soccer, watching TV or listening to music.
- Get support: Be with positive people who make you feel good about yourself and who support your choice to get help.
- Have a plan to deal with cravings: Remind yourself why you stopped drinking and don't give up.

Call a **24-hour toll-free Substance Abuse Help line** (it is free from a Telkom line)
0800 12 13 14 or **SMS 32312**
for advice, support and referral.

Why people may drink:

- They want to feel 'good' – alcohol may make them feel more confident if they are shy.
- They are stressed and want to relax and make the stress 'go away'.
- They want to fit in with their friends (peer pressure).
- Advertisements tend to link drinking with physical attractiveness.

Where to get help

- Nearest Social Worker, Professional Drug Counsellor
- Clinic, Teachers
- Police, Medical Practitioner
- Pastor, Traditional Leader, etc.

