

# Promoting your health over the holiday season!

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The New National Guidelines for Alcohol Consumption (NNGAC) recommend for healthy men and women, drinking no more than two standard drinks on any day as it reduces the risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury over a lifetime. It also recommends drinking no more than four standard drinks on a single occasion as this reduces the risk of alcohol-related injury arising from that occasion.

For many, this information will come as a surprise as these amounts will appear quite small. For some it will challenge our traditional cultural norms where much of how our society functions centres around the consumption of alcohol.

However, as more research is undertaken in this area it is clear we must, in the interests of our long-term health, take the time to reflect on our alcohol consumption, and ask ourselves whether we need to consider modifying our intake.

This subject is particularly relevant at this time of year given we're into summer. The weather is conducive to outdoor living and socialising with friends and family, and alcohol is closely linked with the festive season. We are also entering the traditional holiday period and with it come a range of events, gatherings and celebrations. It's common for alcohol to feature at these occasions.

A significant part of our work at the NMHP involves supporting our industry colleagues to address their alcohol use. From their experience we know there is an increased possibility of over-indulging at this time and factors such as; work and family commitments, relationship challenges, loneliness, financial pressures, conforming to society's expectations and finding the time to do everything we need to do can add a great strain to an already fragile disposition.

Many of the nurses and midwives we see identify the use of alcohol as their major coping strategy, or the crutch they rely upon to manage their stress, anxiety and discomfort. Clearly this does have a remedial effect at the time however their experiences tell them – and us – it is a short-term solution and one that not only fails to solve the problem at that time but further exacerbates the original issue. It is important to remember alcohol is a depressant and as such will have this effect on an individual's mood.

If drinking during the holiday season – or at any time for that matter – it may be helpful to consider trying some of the following strategies included in the NNGAC. Plan limits on your consumption before you start, alternate non-alcoholic drinks into your drinking, try a low-alcohol alternative and eat before and whilst drinking.

You might even consider scheduling alcohol free days into your week, especially if you are on holiday or taking a break from your regular routine! As nurses and midwives we have a great responsibility to the public. We also have a responsibility to care for ourselves. The holiday season can bring with it challenges so it's important to remember to take care of ourselves at this time.

The NMHP will be available for information and support throughout the Christmas, New Year period. However we will be closed on public holidays.

For support during these times you can contact Direct Line 1800 888 236 or Lifeline 13 11 14.

For more information on the NMHP go to [www.nmhp.org.au](http://www.nmhp.org.au) and for advice and guidance on matters related to nurse and midwife health call the office on 9415 7551. We recently launched the NMHP Facebook site which I hope you will visit to keep updated on the service.

'New National Guidelines for Alcohol Consumption'. Australian Government Department of Health & Ageing, [www.alcohol.gov.au](http://www.alcohol.gov.au)