



What if I have had a problem with drugs or alcohol before?

For people in recovery, experiencing a disaster or emergency can trigger strong urges to drink or use drugs again. For others, it makes them more committed to recovery. No matter what you're going through, it's important to make the choice to **stay in recovery**.

Here are a few suggestion to help you:

- Talk with friends and family about the type of support you need to prevent a relapse.
- Reach out to the supports that have helped you before e.g., counselling, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), health care provider.
- Attend your self-help support group more frequently.

If your self-help support group has been displaced or you've been forced to move out of your community contact the 24-hour AA help line closest to you for information about meeting locations or about setting up a new support group in your area.

24-hour AA Multiple District Help lines

- Calgary: 403-777-1212
- Edmonton: 780-424-5900
- Lethbridge: 403-327-8049
- Fort McMurray: 780-743-0099

Leave a message if there is no answer.

If you're having thoughts of self-harm while drinking alcohol, using drugs or taking medication contact your health care provider **right away** or call **911**.

Alberta Health Services Resources & Supports

Health Link [811](tel:811)
 Mental Health Help Line [1-877-303-2642](tel:1-877-303-2642)
 Addiction Services Help Line [1-866-332-2322](tel:1-866-332-2322)
 Addiction & Substance Use
www.albertahealthservices.ca/addictionhelp

Other Resources & Supports

Alcoholics Anonymous www.aa.org

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Alcohol and Other Drug Use After a Disaster or Emergency





After a disaster or emergency, everyone reacts and copes differently. Use of alcohol and other drugs (i.e., prescription medicine, over-the-counter medicine or illegal drugs) may increase as people look for ways to relax, calm down, deal with a stressful situation or pass the time.

What are the risks of alcohol or other drug use after a disaster or emergency?

Short-term risks include:

- Safety of yourself and others, including family violence.
- Accidents while impaired e.g., driving a vehicle, using equipment
- Sleep problem e.g., sleeping less or more, not sleeping at all.
- Making poor decisions.

Long-term risks include:

- Relationship problems e.g., family, friends, or community.
- Becoming dependent on alcohol or other drugs.
- Health problems e.g., diabetes, obesity, certain cancers.

How can I manage my alcohol and other drug use after a disaster or emergency?

- Pay attention to any changes in your use of alcohol and/or drugs.
- Eat well, stay hydrated with water, exercise and get enough sleep.
- Connect with family, friends or other for supports.
- Don't mix alcohol and other drugs—it can cause harmful interactions.
- Ask your health care provider about safe ways to help cope with anxiety, depression, muscle tension and sleep problems.
- Use prescription and over-the-counter drugs only as directed. If you feel your medication isn't working, don't change the dose—talk to your health care provider.

After a disaster or emergency, there are times when no alcohol or other drugs is the best choice.

This includes:

- When driving a vehicle, using tools or operating machinery.
- If you're taking medicine or other drugs that can interact with alcohol.
- When you're responsible for others or you have to make important decisions.
- If you need to move or act quickly.
- When emotions are high e.g., anger, sadness and grief.
- If you're living with mental or physical health problems.
- If you're pregnant or planning on becoming pregnant.

How can you tell if alcohol or other drugs are becoming a problem?

You might have a problem if:

- You're drinking alcohol or using other drugs more than usual.
- Someone has told you they're concerned about your drinking or drug use.
- You feel you need alcohol or other drugs to get through the crisis.
- You can't remember things you've said or done while drinking or using drugs.
- You behave in harmful ways to yourself or others while you're drinking or using drugs.
- You've tried to cut back or stop but can't.
- You cover up or lie about your drinking or drug use.
- When you drink or use drugs, you feel like you can't stop.

If you answered 'yes' to one or more of these sentences then your alcohol or drug use may be a problem.

If you're having trouble controlling your alcohol and other drug use, talk to a trusted friend, counsellor, support person in your life, or health care provider.

For confidential information about managing your alcohol or other drug use, support options or referral services contact the Addiction Help line **1-866-332-2322**.