



CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE ALCOHOL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



If you've grown up with congenital/childhood heart disease you may be wondering how alcohol could impact and interact with your heart and medications you are taking.

Your treating health team are there to support you, discuss your concerns and provide you with the best possible information. Doctors and nurses get asked all sorts of questions and will provide you with the facts regarding drinking and your heart condition/medication. It is best to be informed so you can make the best choices for your health.

You can then decide:

- Whether you will drink alcohol or not,
- if you do drink alcohol, what risks are, and
- how you can reduce the risks and minimise the harms to your health and well-being.

Remember, drinking alcohol carries risks for all young people. Alcohol can affect your body and behaviour. Excessive amounts of alcohol can also affect your mental health at the time of drinking and the day after, including the function of organs, such as the brain and the liver, in the long-term.

How alcohol affects you will also depend on your weight, medications, what you have eaten and how quickly you drink. Different types of alcohol eg wine, beer and spirits, have varying strengths which is important to understand so you can calculate how much is a sensible amount for you.

Alcohol can affect your body in both the short and long term, and younger people are more likely to be impacted as their brains are still developing.

Drinking responsibly

Based on the advice provided by your medical team you might consider drinking. There are a few tips that might help you reduce risk of drinking too much and taking it easy:

- Take your time – it can be a good idea to have a drink in your hand when you first arrive at a party/occasion - and see how long this can last you through the evening – it might stop people offering you a drink too!
- Make sure you know how alcohol will react with any medications you're on
- Drink slowly
- Keep well-hydrated with water - this can be tricky if you are on a fluid restriction so chat to your specialist about how to best manage this
- Keep an eye on your own drink at all time to make sure you know what you are drinking; and can control how much you are drinking.

Congenital heart disease is the most common birth abnormality, affecting 1 in every 100 babies



- Enjoy other activities that will keep you busy and not focused only on alcohol and drinking. Remember, in Australia you must be 18 to purchase and drink alcohol. There are penalties for purchasing and selling alcohol to people under the age of 18.

Further information and useful links:

- Alcohol Think Again: alcoholthinkagain.com.au
- Hello Sunday Morning: hellosundaymorning.org
- Reach out: au.reachout.com/articles/what-is-alcohol-and-how-does-it-work
- Headspace: headspace.org.au/young-people/understanding-alcohol-for-young-people/

Where can I go for further help?

People with congenital heart disease face unique challenges, treatment and often repeated surgeries for their entire lives, and support is critical at every stage of the journey – from when congenital heart disease is diagnosed through childhood, the teenage years and into adulthood.

HeartKids is the only national charity dedicated to supporting Australians of all ages impacted by congenital heart disease, the leading cause of infant death in Australia and a complex chronic disease requiring lifelong treatment.

For over forty years, HeartKids has provided timely support to infants, young people and adults living with congenital heart disease all across Australia. We also fund life-saving research, provide reliable and evidence-based information and advocate for the needs of impacted families.

Our support is a commitment for life.



Medtronic Australasia has supported the development of this factsheet for educational purposes, with no influence on the clinical content.

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