

Alcohol Misuse

When drinking starts to affect mood, sleep, relationships or daily life

Substance misuse can develop quietly. A substance may begin as a way to cope, sleep, socialise, manage pain, increase confidence or get through difficult feelings. This guide is here to help you notice patterns with curiosity rather than judgement.

What misuse can look like

Alcohol misuse is not defined by one particular type of person or one fixed amount. It can include drinking to numb feelings, needing more alcohol to get the same effect, regularly drinking more than intended, hiding use, experiencing memory gaps, or noticing that alcohol is affecting sleep, work, money, relationships or physical health.

Why the pattern can grow

Alcohol can temporarily reduce anxiety or emotional discomfort. That short-term relief can make the brain learn that drinking is a quick route away from difficult feelings. Over time, tolerance can develop and the person may drink more often or in larger amounts.

Signs worth noticing

Changes in routine, morning drinking, repeated hangovers, irritability when unable to drink, neglecting responsibilities, risky behaviour, withdrawal symptoms, or repeated unsuccessful attempts to cut down are all reasons to seek support.

Support and recovery

Recovery may involve a GP, local alcohol service, counselling, peer support and practical changes around triggers. If someone drinks heavily or experiences withdrawal, they should not abruptly stop without medical advice because alcohol withdrawal can sometimes be dangerous.

A gentle check-in

Ask yourself: What does this substance do for me? What happens before I use it? What happens afterwards? What has become harder because of it? What support would make change feel more possible?

Notice	Consider
Triggers, cravings, quantity, secrecy, sleep, mood and consequences.	GP support, local drug/alcohol services, counselling, trusted people and practical harm-reduction advice.

Important safety note

This resource is educational and does not replace medical assessment. Some substances can cause dangerous withdrawal or overdose. If there is unconsciousness, severe breathing difficulty, seizure, collapse, chest pain or immediate danger, seek emergency medical help.

You deserve support that looks at the whole person - not just the substance.