
Partying safely

Summary

- To party safely, have a plan for how much you will drink and whether you will use drugs.
 - Be aware of the serious risks of drinking and drug use.
 - If you are hosting the party, plan how to keep everyone safe, and know what to do in an emergency.
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It is important to create a safe environment at parties so that everyone can have fun.

Staying safe means avoiding injury or assault, not hurting anyone else, and not ruining an event or damaging property. Good decisions are key to staying safe, so staying clear headed is important when you are at parties.

Party risks

Partying is a chance to meet people, spend time with friends and relax. It's also important to take care of yourself and the people around you. You may encounter risks from alcohol or other drug use (your own use or that of others).

These risks include drinking too much, alcohol poisoning, drug overdose, illegal drug use, drink spiking, drink driving, unsafe sex, sexual and other violence, injuries from falling over (or being pushed or hit), gate crashing, being arrested, and social media problems (such as photos of your drunken or sexual behaviour).

All these risks are immediate problems if a party gets out of hand. When you and the people around you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, you are not in control.

Risky partying can have long-term effects too. If you regularly drink too much alcohol or use drugs, then you risk developing serious health conditions (cancer, cirrhosis of the liver, brain damage), memory loss or sexual dysfunction.

You also risk pregnancy (if you have unprotected sex while under the influence of drugs or alcohol), financial problems (if you spend a lot of your income on drugs and alcohol), work or school problems (if you have a lot of time off to recover from hangovers and comedowns), and the breakdown of your relationships with family and friends.

Alcohol at parties

Alcohol can make you feel confident and fearless, which can lead to impaired decision making (such as violence, casual sex or drink driving). It also slows your nervous system so you become uncoordinated, have slow reflexes, and have trouble thinking clearly.

So, how can you drink but stay safe?

- start with a non-alcoholic drink to quench your thirst before you start drinking. Drink water or soft drinks between alcoholic drinks. And think about drinking low alcohol drinks, and avoiding big glasses or bottles.
 - avoid sculling competitions or any drinking game.
 - remember to eat before and while drinking, because your body will take longer to absorb the alcohol.
 - drink standard drinks. Australian bars, clubs and pubs must serve a '**standard drink**'.
 - remember, the size of drinks is different at private functions. In particular, cocktails and party punch may have a lot more alcohol than one standard drink.
 - watch that no-one tops up your drink so you end up drinking more than the standard glass without knowing.
 - never accept a drink from a stranger, and watch your drink to be sure no-one adds anything to it, such as
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alcohol or drugs. This is known as **drink spiking**, and it is illegal -- whether it is done to cause harm, or as a joke.

Most importantly, if you do not like alcohol, if you know that it makes you sick, or if you are driving, do not drink. You will still have a good time, and you may even have a better time than if you did drink.

Drugs at parties

Drugs change how your body and brain function.

If you are at a party, you may be offered marijuana, ecstasy, cocaine, LSD, amphetamines or other illegal drugs. Taking these drugs is against the law and they are a serious health risk. Be aware that if you use, carry or share illegal drugs, you can be arrested.

There is no quality control for drugs: you don't know where they were made, who made them, what they contain, or even how they will affect you. Every time you take drugs, you are taking a gamble

Mixing drugs can be even more dangerous -- this includes mixing drugs and alcohol.

Don't be pressured by friends into doing drugs. Remember you can always say 'no'.

Sex at parties when you're drunk or drugged

Under the influence of alcohol or drugs, you might decide to hook up with someone. This may be a choice that you normally would not make, and it may lead to embarrassment or regret.

Worse, you might forget about safe sex and not use a condom. The result could be a **pregnancy** or the transfer of a **sexually transmitted infection** (STI).

If you have had **unprotected sex while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at a party**, and you are concerned about your health or possible pregnancy, it is important to talk to your GP.

If sex occurred without your consent, then this is **sexual assault**, and it is a crime. Call **CASA (Centres Against Sexual Assault)** for help and advice, on 1800 806 292. Or contact the **Sexual Assault Crisis Line** on 1800 806 292.

Also, be aware that even if you are feeling fine, your sexual partner may not be. If they are so drunk that they do not really know what they're doing, then you do not have their consent to have sex.

You should stop straight away or you may be committing **sexual assault**.

Violence at parties

Sometimes people lose control when they're under the influence of drugs and alcohol, and they lash out.

Their violence may be aimed at one person, or a group. Or it may even be a general aggression that involves smashing glasses and damaging property.

Whatever form it takes, violence is scary for the people who see it, and dangerous for the people in its path. If you see someone being violent at a party, tell the host. If the host cannot get the person to leave, then they should call the police (000). In the meantime, try to avoid being near the person.

If you are hurt at a party, immediately tell your host, a friend or call your family. It's important to have any medical care that you need, and to address any fear that you feel.

Is it me?

Maybe you become aggressive when you drink. If you think you need help, talk to a counsellor about your violent behaviour (such as Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800 or Lifeline on 13 11 14).

Have a plan for partying safely

When you intend to drink at parties, have a buddy. Your buddy should look out for you, and you should look out for them.

Don't wander off once you start to drink. Stick with your trusted friends.

It is important to have a clear plan of how you will get home, and a plan B, just in case your designated driver decided to drink.

Also keep these two key tips in mind:

- know how much you plan to drink, and stick to that amount. Order your own drinks, and always keep your eye on them.
- if you choose to take drugs at a party, let someone know what you're using. If something goes wrong, you will have someone who can tell the ambulance about your drug use on the night.

If you are hosting the party

When you are the host, you have a responsibility for the safety of yourself and others. You need to think about your own security, the security of your guests and your property and plan for emergencies.

It is important to notify your neighbours that you are having a party, and to contact your local police or council regarding acceptable noise levels.

If you don't want people to use drugs at your party, you need to be open and honest about this with your guests. If you think strangers will come to your party, put 'no drugs' on any social media invites, spread the word verbally, and think about having someone at the entrance who can tell people as they arrive.

But, if you think the party will include drinking or drug use, then you need to **be prepared** for anything to happen.

In particular, keep a list of important phone numbers – 000 (ambulance, police, fire), your local police station, the nearest medical centre and taxi services – in your mobile and near the home telephone.

And make sure you know how to deal with basic emergencies (such as small fires, cuts and bleeding, or broken limbs) until help arrives.

Underage guests

If you are having a party, you need to ensure a safe environment for all your guests, particularly those who are under the legal drinking age (18 years). Arrange for a responsible adult (who is not drinking) to supervise the underage guests.

You can also help by not supplying alcohol to underage guests. And don't let other people (such as older siblings) do so.

Remember, the law does not allow an underage person to drink in a private household without the permission of their parents. The permission of other people's parents does not count. For more information on **secondary supply** laws, check with your local police, community legal services and council office.

If you learn that an underage guest has been drinking, arrange safe transport home for them immediately. Let their parents know what has happened, so they can look for signs of a bad reaction to the alcohol.

Look out for your friends

If you notice a friend is not well at a party, you need to check whether they are drunk or suffering from alcohol poisoning or drug overdose.

Call 000 (for ambulance) if your friend shows any of the following signs:

- mental confusion, passing out, coma
- vomiting
- seizures or shaking
- rolling eyes or staring eyes
- very slow or irregular breathing
- a low body temperature, paleness and blue skin.

You should also get immediate help if you think a friend has been assaulted. Your friend may not be conscious, or perhaps they cannot communicate adequately, so you need to assess the situation.

If you think they need medical help, call 000 for an ambulance. Then advise the ambulance officers that you suspect an offence has been committed against your friend.

Remember...

- when partying, plan how much you will drink. And have a friend help you stick to the plan.

- if you decide to take drugs, let someone know what you are taking, in case something goes wrong.
- if you have been drinking or taking drugs, don't drive home. You may be past the legal limit (0.05 blood alcohol concentration – BAC) after only two drinks. And, if you are a learner driver or probationary license holder, then you must not drink at all if you are driving.
- even if you sleep for a few hours after a late party, you may still have alcohol or drugs in your system that make it too risky to drive the next morning.
- social media can make or break the safety of your party. If you are the host, make sure that your invitations do not reach strangers, and that your messages about alcohol and drugs are clear.

Where to get help

- call 000 for emergency medical or police help
- your parents, a relative or a trusted friend
- your GP
- **Kids Helpline** Tel. 1800 55 1800
- Kids Helpline [information about safe parties](#)
- **ReachOut**
- **Lifeline** Tel. 1311 14
- Youth Central – [what can go wrong at parties](#)
- The Other Talk – for [information about safe partying](#)
- Victoria Legal Aid – for [legal help with sexual assault](#)
- **Centres Against Sexual Assault**
- **Victoria Police advice on sexual assault**

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