
Talking to health professionals about drugs, alcohol or addiction

Summary

- Open and honest communication with your doctor is important.
 - Not all treatments require referral from your doctor.
 - Setting goals for yourself during treatment can help.
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Talking with your doctor or healthcare professional is an important step in getting help and support. It can be confronting to start talking about your alcohol or drug use but open and honest communication is important to ensure you get the best, most appropriate advice and treatment. Withholding information about what substances you use, how much and how often can be detrimental to your treatment. Remember that the conversations you have with your doctor are private and confidential. Your doctor will be able to provide advice about the alcohol treatment options or drug treatment services that are best for your situation. They will also provide any necessary referrals.

Referrals for alcohol and drug treatment services

Depending on your circumstances, there are many services to which you can be referred for treatment for addiction. Treatments can include services like long term residential rehabilitation, drug testing, detoxification as well as non-drug physical and psychological treatments and counselling.

Some treatments for addiction don't require a doctors' referral. You can access counsellors at any time via telephone or online helplines and there are online self-assessment and self-referral avenues you can use too:

- **DirectLine** is a 24/7 confidential alcohol and drug counselling and referral service. Call DirectLine **1800 888 236**
- **Turning Point online self-assessment tool**: will help you to figure out if your drinking levels or drug use is a problem for you
- **Counselling Online**: provides online access to counselling services
- **YoDAA** is Victoria's Youth Drug and Alcohol Advice service. You can call 24/7 on **1800 458 685**
- **Just Ask Us** is a service for University students with drug and alcohol problems
- **Say When ProblemCheck**: an online quiz to work out if alcohol is causing problems in your life.

You can also refer yourself to your local Intake and Assessment centre. Call DirectLine **1800 888 236** to find details of the centre closest to you.

Accessing alcohol or drug treatment services

Intake and assessment is used to work out the best treatment path for people with alcohol or drug problems. The service, which is available across Victoria, assesses your situation and if necessary, refers clients to the most suitable treatment provider.

Intake and assessment delivers standardised, comprehensive assessments and develops initial treatment plans that accompany clients to treatment services. It also actively refers people to other services, where appropriate, including self-managed options.

You can access an intake and assessment team via **DirectLine** (Victoria's 24-hour alcohol and drug information phone line), or you can contact them directly. Intake, screening and assessment can happen face to face, over the phone, via the internet or by 'outreach' (when the service comes to you).

In these assessments it is important that you provide as much open and honest information as you can. Your healthcare providers will work with you to get you the best possible treatment that is appropriate for your needs.

With your consent the information gathered in your initial assessment, as well as your treatment plan will then be available to other relevant service providers. This means you won't need more assessments as your information will be shared with these other healthcare professionals.

Monitoring your own progress

Undergoing any kind of drug or alcohol treatment can be daunting. Setting goals and monitoring them along the way helps you to get a sense of your own progress. It makes sense to work on your goals with your healthcare provider. Setting yourself a clear path with the help of health professionals will make it easier to see that you're getting somewhere.

Identifying realistic goals

When you are thinking about your goals try to be realistic. A goal that is unattainable can set you back mentally and physically. Achieving lots of 'easier' goals is a great way to achieve progress.

Sometimes a goal will turn out to be unrealistic in the timeframe you have set yourself or you will discover that you are simply not ready mentally to achieve a goal you have set yourself. If you fail to achieve a goal, keep trying, it is not an easy process. Enlist friends and families to help or support you to achieve your goals.

There is nothing wrong with failure. What is important is what you do next. See your failure as a learning exercise, commit to never making the same mistakes again and move on. Concentrate on your other goals or redefine the goal that you missed so it is more achievable next time.

Where to get help

- **Your doctor or healthcare professional**
- **DirectLine** is a 24/7 confidential alcohol and drug counselling and referral service. Call DirectLine **1800 888 236**

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

Better Health Channel - (need new cp)

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