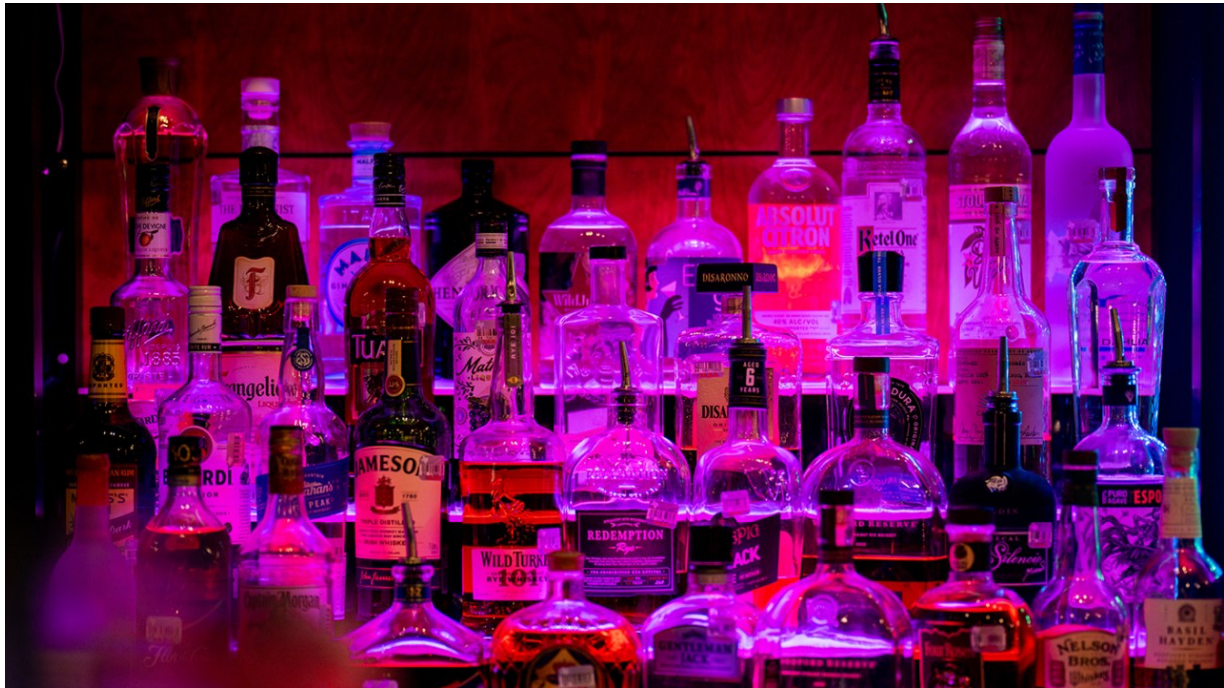




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## **Alcohol and Mental Health**



Alcohol problems and mental ill health are closely linked.

Research shows that people who drink alcohol are more likely to develop mental health problems. It's also true that people with severe mental illness are more likely to have alcohol problems. This may be because they 'self-medicate', meaning they drink to deal with difficult feelings or symptoms.

## **Alcohol and Depression**

Regular heavy drinking is linked to symptoms of depression. People with depression who drink alcohol often start to feel better within the first few weeks of stopping drinking. If you try this and feel better, it's likely the alcohol was causing your depression. If your symptoms of depression continue, speak to your GP for help.



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It's generally not recommended to drink if you're taking antidepressants. Alcohol can make depression worse and increase the side effects of some antidepressants. If you're trying to cut down or stop drinking, research shows some antidepressants can increase your risk of relapsing. The NHS website has more information on alcohol and antidepressants.

### **Alcohol and Anxiety**

If you experience anxiety, alcohol can give you a very short-lived feeling of relaxation – but this quickly disappears. If you rely on alcohol to cover your anxiety, you may soon find yourself drinking more and more to relax. Over time, this can lead to alcohol dependence.

You may also find a hangover makes your anxiety worse.

If you use alcohol to unwind, think about other ways you can find to relax: meditation, yoga, exercise or making time for things you enjoy, for example.

### **Alcohol and Psychosis**

It's possible to experience psychosis if you regularly drink a lot of alcohol or if you're a heavy drinker and suddenly stop drinking.

### **Alcohol, Suicide and Self-harm**

Because alcohol can make you lose your inhibitions and act more impulsively, it may lead to actions such as self-harm or suicide. Heavy drinking is also linked to suicidal thoughts and attempts.

If you're having suicidal feelings, you can Call 116 123 and speak to the Samaritans free any time. Call 999 or go to A&E if you've hurt yourself or think you might act on suicidal thoughts.

### **Getting help if you're worried about your drinking**

The government advises that both men and women should not regularly drink more than 14 units a week. This is the equivalent of six pints of average-strength beer or six medium



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glasses of wine. If you regularly drink as much of this, it's best to spread it over three or more days.

If you're worried about drinking or feel it's affecting your mental health, a lot of help is available.

### **Getting support**

**As SIX BOARDMEMBER, you also have SIX MHA for expert care and support. We have peer workers, nurses and therapists who have specialised training in the needs of those who use substances from all walks of life.**

Talk to your GP. It might feel difficult, but they will have heard from many other people going through something similar and will want to help you. They can check your physical health and put you in touch with local support, such as local NHS alcohol addiction support services. If you're physically dependent on alcohol and need to stop drinking completely, stopping suddenly could be harmful. Your GP can give you advice and/or medication to help you do this safely.

Email us at [helpine@sixmha.org](mailto:helpine@sixmha.org) or

Call us on 084321 6 90 90

**Master App Code – SIX-869-916**

**We are here for you!**



