



# Alcohol and Drug Information Kit

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## ***West Gippsland Region***

*Latrobe Valley, Warragul, and  
Traralgon*

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## Introduction

Welcome to VicForests Alcohol and Drug Information Kit for the West Gippsland Region. This guide offers information, support resources and service contacts for drugs and alcohol in the Latrobe Valley, Warragul Traralgon and surrounding areas.

It has been designed to give staff and work colleagues a starting point for conversations and/or assistance with alcohol and/or drug addiction or abuse. Along with support resources and service contacts for drugs and alcohol, this guide offers a brief summary of the following drugs and the signs and symptoms of their impact on the body.

- Alcohol
- Amphetamines/Methamphetamines
- Marijuana
- Heroin
- Ecstasy/GHB
- Prescription Medications

## Alcohol

Alcohol (ethanol or ethyl alcohol) is the foundation ingredient found in beer, wine and spirits which in excess causes drunkenness. Considered a social drug, alcohol is derived from the reaction of yeast on mature grains and fruit products. Alcohol is classified as a depressant, as it slows down the body's vital functions and can affect people in different ways (Foundation for a Drug Free World, 2015; State Government of Victoria, 2015).

### *Alcohol and the Body*

Alcohol enters the body via the circulation system through little veins in the dividers of the stomach and small intestine. Within minutes of consumption, it travels from the stomach to the brain, where it rapidly slows the functioning activity of nerve cells. Generally 20% of liquor is taken in and absorbed by the stomach, whilst 80% is ingested through the small intestine. (Foundation for a Drug Free World, 2015).

The liver is also significantly affected by alcohol consumption. It assists in the breakdown of alcohol within the body by working to convert it into a nontoxic substance (Foundation for a Drug Free World, 2015).

**Alcohol affects each individual differently, based on:**

- Their size, weight and wellbeing.
- Whether the person is used to drinking it.
- Whether other drugs are taken and mixed with the alcohol.
- The amount of alcohol consumed.
- The strength of the drink.

(State Government of Victoria, 2012)

Depending on how much an individual has had to drink, some short term signs and symptoms of alcohol intoxication can include:

- Slow reactions
- Slurred speech
- Drowsiness
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Breathing difficulties
- Distorted vision and hearing
- Impaired judgment
- Decreased perception and coordination

- Unconsciousness
- Anaemia (loss of red blood cells)
- Blackouts (memory lapses, where the drinker cannot remember events that occurred while under the influence)
- Coma or death (in severe cases)

(Foundation for a Drug Free World, 2015; State Government of Victoria, 2012)

Some long term signs and symptoms of continued alcohol use can include:

- Ongoing cognitive impairments such as poor memory and problem solving
  - Increased risk of heart disease and stroke
  - Increased risk of mouth, throat, oesophageal, bowel, breast, and liver cancer
  - Weakening of muscles and bones
  - Low libido, impotence and infertility
  - Risk of liver disease and damage
  - Diseases of the gastrointestinal tract, such as ulcers and pancreatitis
  - Nutritional deficiencies and weight gain
  - Poor job performance, relationship conflicts and
  - Trouble with the law
- (State Government of Victoria, 2012)

### *Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism*

While an agreed definition of an alcoholic is lacking, associations such as Alcoholics Anonymous suggest that it is an individual's responsibility to determine if they are in fact an Alcoholic. Despite this however, it is acknowledged that there are some common behaviours that may indicate somebody may be struggling with and/or dependent on alcohol (State Government of Victoria, 2015).

Common warning signs and symptoms of alcohol abuse include:

- **Repeatedly neglecting responsibilities at home, work, or school because of drinking.**
- **Using alcohol in situations where it's unsafe and or physically dangerous**, such as drinking and driving, operating machinery while intoxicated, or mixing alcohol with prescription medication against medical advice.
- **Experiencing repeated legal problems on account of a drinking habit.**
- **Continuing to drink even though alcohol use is causing issues with relationships.** Getting drunk with friends, for example, even though you know a family member will be very upset, or fighting with your family because they dislike how you act when you drink.

- **Drinking as a way to relax or de-stress.** Many drinking problems start when people use alcohol to self-soothe and relieve stress. Getting highly intoxicated after every stressful day, for example, or reaching for a bottle every time you have an argument with your spouse or boss (State Government of Victoria, 2015; Helpguide.org, 2015)

In addition to the signs and symptoms described above, it is widely agreed that alcoholism or alcohol dependence is considered to be the most severe form of drinking problem. Alcoholism is often determined when an individual feels they need alcohol in order to perform basic day to day functions. They may also have a strong physical urge to drink (Helpguide.org, 2015).

Common warning signs and symptoms of alcoholism can include:

- **Tolerance** – An individual begins to show a higher tolerance towards alcohol, i.e. they can drink more than others before showing signs of being “Drunk”; or they consume more than they usually do to feel “Buzzed” or relaxed.
- **Drinking to manage symptoms of Alcohol Withdrawal** - An individual begins to drink to avoid or mask the symptoms of alcohol withdrawal. These can include:
  - Anxiety or jumpiness
  - Shakiness or trembling
  - Sweating
  - Nausea and vomiting
  - Insomnia
  - Depression
  - Irritability
  - Fatigue
  - Loss of appetite
  - Headache, and in severe cases
  - Hallucinations, confusion, seizures, fever, and agitation (Helpguide.org, 2015).

Other indicators can also include:

- **Feeling a lack of control over a drinking habit.** The person consumes more than they wanted to, for longer than they intended, despite telling themselves they wouldn't. (Helpguide.org, 2015).
- **Wanting to quit drinking, but feeling like you can't.** Having a strong desire to cut down or stop alcohol use, but efforts to quit have been unsuccessful (Helpguide.org, 2015).
- **Giving up other activities because of alcohol.** Spending less time on activities that used to be important to you (hanging out with family and friends, going to the gym, pursuing your hobbies) because of your alcohol use (Helpguide.org, 2015).
- **Alcohol takes up a great deal of energy and focus.** Spending more time drinking, thinking about it, or recovering from its effects. Along with few if any interests or social involvements that don't revolve around drinking (Helpguide.org, 2015).
- **Drinking even though you know it's causing problems.** For example, recognizing that alcohol use is damaging a relationship, making your depression worse, or causing health problems, but continuing to drink anyway (Helpguide.org, 2015).

## **Drugs, Drug Abuse and Addiction**

Much like alcohol, there are some common behaviours, which may indicate that somebody may be struggling with and/or becoming dependent on drugs (State Government of Victoria, 2015; Helpguide.org, 2015).

Common warning signs and symptoms of drug abuse include:

### **Physical**

- Bloodshot eyes, pupil dilation (pupils larger or smaller than normal)
- Changes in eating or sleep habits
- Sudden weight fluctuation (i.e. weight gain/loss)
- Deterioration of physical appearance, poor personal hygiene and care.
- Unusual odors on breath, body, or clothing
- Tremors, slurred speech, or impaired coordination (Helpguide.org, 2015).

## **Behavioural**

- Drop in attendance and/or performance at work or school
- Unexplained need for money or having financial problems; borrowing or stealing funds
- Engaging in secretive or suspicious behaviour
- Sudden change in friends, favourite hangouts, and hobbies
- Frequently getting into trouble (fights, accidents, unlawful activities) (Helpguide.org, 2015).

## **Psychological**

- A sudden unexplained change in personality or attitude (E.g. Mood swings, irritability, or angry outbursts.
- Periods of unusual hyperactivity, agitation, or giddiness.
- Lacks motivation; appears lethargic or “spaced out”
- Seems fearful, anxious, or paranoid, for no apparent reason.

Other indicators can also include:

- **Repeatedly neglecting responsibilities at home, work, or school because of drug use** (Helpguide.org, 2015).
- **Using drugs under dangerous conditions or taking risks while “High”**, such as driving, using dirty needles, or participating in risky sexual behaviour (Helpguide.org, 2015).
- **Experiencing repeated legal problems on account of a drug habit**, such as arrests for disorderly conduct, driving under the influence, or stealing to support an addiction (Helpguide.org, 2015).
- **Your drug use is causing problems in your relationships**, such as fights with your partner or family members, an unhappy boss, or the loss of friends (Helpguide.org, 2015).

Similarly to alcohol, common warning signs and symptoms of drug addiction can include:

- **Tolerance** – the need to use more of the drug to experience the same effects that use to be achieved with smaller amounts (Helpguide.org, 2015).
- **Using to manage symptoms of Drug Withdrawal** - An individual begins to use the drug to avoid or mask the symptoms of drug withdrawal.

- **Feeling a lack of control over a drug habit.** The person consumes more than they wanted to, for longer than they intended, despite telling themselves they wouldn't. (Helpguide.org, 2015).
- **Wanting to quit drugs, but feeling like it's impossible.** Having a strong desire to cut down or stop drug use, but efforts to quit have been unsuccessful (Helpguide.org, 2015).
- **Day to day life revolves around drug use.** The person spends a lot of time using and thinking about drugs, figuring out how to get them, and recovering from the drug's effects (Helpguide.org, 2015).
- **Abandonment of activities that were previously enjoyed,** such as hobbies, sports, and socializing, because of drug use (Helpguide.org, 2015).
- **Continuing to use drugs, despite knowing that they are harming physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.** Drug use is causing major health problems—blackouts, infections, mood swings, depression, paranoia—but the user continues to use anyway (Helpguide.org, 2015)

## Amphetamines/Methamphetamines

Commonly classified as “Speed Drugs” Amphetamines/ Methamphetamines are stimulant drugs that increase and speed up activity within the Central Nervous System. Common street terms for these drugs are “**Crystal**”, “**Ice**”, “**Glass**” and “**Crank**”.

More often than not “Crystal” arrives in a powder form that can be inhaled, injected, or consumed while “Crank” arrives in a tablet or capsule form. Methamphetamines known as “Ice” and “Glass” are also smoke-able (Jeng, Wong, Ting-A-Kee and Wells, 2005) as cited in (Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015).

Made up of various chemicals these drugs impact the body in various ways, however common warning signs and symptoms of Amphetamine or Methamphetamine use can include:

- Feeling highly energetic
- Extremely talkative and restless
- Elevated heart rate and blood pressure
- Dilated pupils

Dependant on the quantity taken, high dosages can also lead too:

- Aggressive, hostile and/or violent behaviour
- Paranoia
- Fevers
- Sweating
- Headaches
- Blurred Vision
- Dizziness
- Chest Pain
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea

(Jeng, Wong, Ting-A-Kee and Wells, 2005) as cited in (Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015).

Amphetamines and methamphetamines are highly addictive, and research indicates that users rapidly develop a strong tolerance to them. Users, who unexpectedly stop taking these substances, may experience withdrawal symptoms of extreme fatigue, hunger, irritability and depression (Jeng, Wong, Ting-A-Kee and Wells, 2005) as cited in (Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015).

Prolonged use of amphetamines and methamphetamines can also lead to severe physical and mental health problems, the most common being **Amphetamine Psychosis**. While the warning signs and/or symptoms of Amphetamine Psychosis generally subside once an individual stops using these substances, symptoms typically include:

- Hallucinations,
- Paranoia, and
- Bizarre and/or violent behaviour.

(Jeng, Wong, Ting-A-Kee and Wells, 2005) as cited in (Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015).

## **Cannabis (Marijuana, Hashish, Hashish oil)**

**Cannabis** is the umbrella term given to any of the drug substances derived from the Indian Hemp Plant. Part of the “Cannabis” drug family, marijuana is the term given to the dried flowers, seeds and leaves of the Indian Hemp Plant. Delta-9-Tetrahydro-Cannabinol or THC is the main component found in this plant (Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015).

A psychoactive drug, marijuana is generally smoked via rolled cigarette (commonly known as a joint) or via pipes called bong or hookahs. It can also be consumed when in a Hashish form (Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015).

Common warning signs and symptoms of Cannabis use can include:

- Feeling more relaxed
- Decreased inhibitions
- Decreased motivation
- Becoming more talkative/ outgoing
- Impaired concentration/ balance/ coordination
- Elevated heart rate
- Bloodshot eyes
- Increased appetite (“Having the munchies”)
- Dry Mouth / throat

- Lethargy

(Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015).

Dependant on the quantity taken, high dosages can also lead too:

- Paranoia
- Feeling highly afraid
- Panic/ Anxiety
- Vivid and alarming hallucinations
- Severe impairment to spatial and time awareness

(Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015).

## Heroin

A highly addictive drug, heroin is part of a group of strong pain killing drugs known as Opioids. Described on the street as garbage, H, smack, or horse, heroin can come in a variety of different substance forms and colours (Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015). Depending on the drug's level of purity and how it is produced, heroin can appear as a fine white powder or it can be an earthy tar like substance (Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015).

Often taken intravenously, heroin users typically inject the drug into their bodies, as this can offer an increased drug rush sensation and a more immediate effect. Heroin can also be inhaled, smoked, or consumed. Individuals who inject the drug can expose themselves to the high risk overdose due to drug's depressant qualities. They can also expose themselves to AIDS, Hepatitis C and other infectious diseases (Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015).

The drug rush sensation produced by heroin can take effect within a few seconds and last for several minutes. Once this subsides, users often experience feelings of serenity which may last for an hour or so. The influences of heroin can last between 6-12 hours, before a user needs to use again to prevent the symptoms of drug withdrawal (Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015).

Common warning signs and symptoms of Heroin use can include:

- Nausea and vomiting (for first time users)
- Decreased breathing
- Pinpoint pupils
- Itchiness and
- Sweating

(Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015)

Prolonged heroin use can also cause:

- Constipation
- Decreased sex drive and
- Irregularity or cessation of a female's menstrual cycle.

(Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015)

Common signs of withdrawal symptoms from Heroin can include:

- Intense vomiting/diarrhoea/restlessness
- Runny nose and sneezing
- Insomnia
- Anxiety
- Cravings

## Ecstasy/GHB

### *Ecstasy*

A typical substance found in night clubs and at rave parties, ecstasy is the common term given to the drug methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA). MDMA is a combined chemical substance that consists of methamphetamines with hallucinogenic characteristics (Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015).

Ecstasy is predominately available in tablet, powder or capsule form. Typical street terms for ecstasy include “**X-TC**”, “**Adam**”, “**Clarity**” and “**Lover’s Speed**”. MDMA impacts on and alters the brain’s serotonin levels. This brain chemical plays a significant role in controlling mood, aggression, sexual activity, sleep, and sensitivity to pain. A typical dose of MDMA ranges from approximately 100-125 milligrams and its effects usually begin to take hold approximately 20-40 minutes after a tablet has been taken (Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015).

Common warning signs and symptoms of Ecstasy use can include:

- Intense changes in mood/ mood swings - experiencing feelings of exhilaration, empathy, emotional warmth, self-acceptance, confusion and depression
- Drug cravings

- Anxiety
- Paranoia
- Insomnia
- Exhaustion/ Dehydration
- Kidney failure
- Heart Attack
- Muscle tension,
- Blurred vision,
- Involuntary teeth clenching,
- Rapid eye movement,
- Chills and sweating
- Appetite and thirst suppression

(Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015)

Regular and long term use can also lead to permanent damage to areas of the brain that control for thought, memory and pleasure (Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015).

## ***GHB***

Gamma hydroxybutyrate or GHB is found naturally in the body in small quantities. When consumed in high doses or mixed with other drug substances it can have significantly negative impacts on the body. GHB is considered a depressant as it assists in decreasing heart rate, respiration rate and body temperature (Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015).

When consumed in large amounts, GHB can render a user or victim unconscious, cause significant brain damage or lead to death. GHB is often used as a “Date Rape Drug” because of its strong sedative effects. As yet the long-term impacts of prolonged use GHB are unknown. It is a clear and odourless substance (Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, 2015).

Common warning signs and symptoms of GHB use can include:

- Excessive feelings of euphoria and sedation

## Prescription Medications

Prescription drug abuse involves taking medicines in a different way that varies or goes against the advice given by a medical practitioner. This form of drug abuse can include:

- Taking a medicine that has been prescribed for another person.
- Not adhering to the recommended dosage instructions (e.g. taking too much or too little)
- Taking the medicine in a different way to what was intended (e.g. crushing tablets and snorting or injecting them)
- Using the medicine for another purpose (e.g. to get high)

(US National Library of Medicine, 2015)

At times misusing some prescription drugs can lead to other significant drug addictions, particularly if the medicines involved include narcotic painkillers, sedatives, tranquilizers, and or other stimulants (US National Library of Medicine, 2015). All medicines have risks and side effects, medical practitioners take these risks into account when providing medications to their patients.

Prescription drug abusers may be unaware of or unable to comprehend these risks and the medicines prescribed may be unsuitable for them, particularly when taken in high quantities, or when mixed with other substances (US National Library of Medicine, 2015).

## Support Service Contacts and Information Resources

**For URGENT EMERGENCY Medical Care and Assistance please call 000 in the first instance.**

### Latrobe Valley Warragul Traralgon

#### Latrobe Community Health Service

**1800 242 696**

**Corner, Mason St and Palmerston St, Warragul VIC 3820**

**Corner, Princes Hwy and Seymour St, Traralgon VIC 3844**

With assistance from the Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO) Intake and Referral Service, the Latrobe Community Health Service offers **NON URGENT MEDICAL /CRISIS** support services for Drugs and/or Alcohol in the Latrobe Valley, Warragul, Traralgon and surrounding areas. The Service also has developed a partnership with the Youth Drugs and Alcohol Advice (YoDAA) organisation to support and assist young people. To access these services call **ACSO Connect - 1300 022 760 Over 21 or YoDAA 24 Hour Free Support Line: 1800 458 685 (21 and under)**

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** If you are under 21, it is recommended that you call Latrobe Community Health Service that directly on 1800 242 696 in the first instance.

**Eligibility:** Must reside, work, study or spend majority of time in the Gippsland Region.

***Operating Hours:***

**Warragul:** Monday - Friday: 8:30am - 5:00pm

**Traralgon:** Monday - Tuesday: 8:30am - 5:00pm, Wednesday: 8:30am - 8:30pm, Thursday - Friday: 8:30am - 5:00pm.

***Referral Required:*** Yes, from ACSO

***Drugs Treated:*** N/A – please call to confirm which drugs are treated

***Cost for treatment:*** Many services are free, contact service for more information.

***Ages Treated:*** All ages

***Treatment Programs/Support Services:*** Counselling, care/recovery support, Home –based and Specialist Clinic Withdrawal programs, Day Rehabilitation Programs, Clean Needle and Syringe Program.

## **Latrobe Regional Hospital**

**Emergency Department Telephone: 03 5173 8000**

**General Enquiries: 03 5173 8000**

**Princes Highway, Traralgon West, Victoria, 3844**

Offers emergency medical treatment.

## **Alcoholics Anonymous Victoria – Warragul**

*Referral Required:* No

*Drugs Treated:* Alcohol

*Cost for treatment:* There are no fees for treatment

*Ages Treated:* All ages treated

*Treatment Programs/Support Services:* Non-medical assistance and support for Alcohol withdrawal or reduction.

*Meetings:* Mondays 8pm, **210 Sutton Street, WARRAGUL VIC 3820**

## **Alcoholics Anonymous Victoria – Traralgon (Women’s Group)**

*Referral Required:* No

*Drugs Treated:* Alcohol

*Cost for treatment:* There are no fees for treatment

***Ages Treated:*** All ages treated

***Treatment Programs/Support Services:*** Non-medical assistance and support for Alcohol withdrawal or reduction.

***Meetings:*** Mondays 4.00 pm to 5.30 pm, **the Teychenne Centre, 11 – 13 Breed Street Traralgon VIC 3844 (opposite Subway)**

## **Alcoholics Anonymous Victoria – Traralgon (Saturday Night Group)**

***Referral Required:*** No

***Drugs Treated:*** Alcohol

***Cost for treatment:*** There are no fees for treatment

***Ages Treated:*** All ages treated

***Treatment Programs/Support Services:*** Non-medical assistance and support for Alcohol withdrawal or reduction.

***Meetings:*** Saturday 8pm, **the Teychenne Centre, 11 – 13 Breed Street Traralgon VIC 3844 (opposite Subway)**

## **Alcoholics Anonymous Victoria – Traralgon (Back to Basics Group)**

***Referral Required:*** No

***Drugs Treated:*** Alcohol

***Cost for treatment:*** There are no fees for treatment

***Ages Treated:*** All ages treated

***Treatment Programs/Support Services:*** Non-medical assistance and support for Alcohol withdrawal or reduction.

***Meetings:*** Friday 8 pm, **the Teychenne Centre, 11 – 13 Breed Street Traralgon VIC 3844 (opposite Subway)**

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