

Are Alcohol/Drugs Getting in Your Way During COVID-19?

Are you worried about your **alcohol/drug use** due to the pandemic? Are you someone who is in **recovery** from a substance use disorder (also known as addiction) and worried about relapse? You are not alone.

If You Are Using Alcohol and/or Drugs to Cope...

What can I do if I notice an increase in my alcohol or drug use?

- Avoid “triggers” that make it easier to use or crave substances: virtual ‘happy hour’ or friends that use or encourage you to use alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs.
- Use your supports, like family or friends, to talk through your feelings and worries, including about your alcohol or drug use.
- Determine if you might need help with your alcohol/drug use – see below for questions you can ask yourself.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist about Naloxone - a federally-approved medicine that can save a life during an opioid (including painkillers) overdose when given right away.
- If you need help, call the Los Angeles County Substance Abuse Service Helpline (SASH) toll-free. A team of caring professionals is available 24/7 to speak with you about treatment options and can link you to a qualified provider.

How can I practice safe hygiene during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after handling money or packages, or coming into direct contact with other people.
- Avoid smoking or vaping to reduce the risk of breathing problems.
- Do not share supplies, such as: pipes, vapes, cigarettes, injection supplies, bongs, needles, straws, etc.

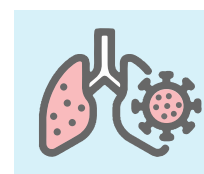
Ask Yourself...

- Are you using more alcohol or drugs than you want to, or is it difficult to cut down or control your substance use?
- Do you feel your alcohol or drug use is holding you back or negatively affecting your relationships, work, school, or home life?
- Have you been told that you should stop drinking or doing drugs, or that you should do them less often?
- Do you feel physically sick or unwell when you stop using alcohol or drugs?

Can alcohol or drug use increase my risk related to COVID-19?



- ▶ Alcohol and certain drugs weaken the immune system.



- ▶ COVID-19 infection may result in breathing problems that become worse when combined with opioids (including painkillers), stimulants, benzo, and alcohol.



- ▶ Smoking or vaping nicotine products or drugs like marijuana, crack or meth makes breathing problems worse.



- ▶ Withdrawal from alcohol and other drugs, including opioid painkillers, may worsen breathing difficulties.

A “yes” to any of these questions can help you determine if you might need help with alcohol or other drug use.

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If You Are in Treatment or Recovery...

How important is connecting with others in preventing relapse?

- Social support and connecting with others are often key to maintaining sobriety.
- Social/physical distancing DOES NOT mean total isolation. Use phone, video chat, email, text or social media to stay in touch with others
- Share your feelings with family, friends, and peers to handle negative self-talk and worry.
- Access online (virtual) peer support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous.

What can I do to stay on the road of recovery?

- Stay focused on coping one day at a time.
- If you are currently in treatment, stay in treatment. People who stay in treatment are more likely to have long-term positive outcomes.
- Continue routines that create order in your day such as keeping to a regular schedule for waking up and going to sleep, grooming, or physical activity.
- During the COVID-19 crisis, it may be possible to obtain take-home medications or start Medications for Addiction Treatment (MAT) by telehealth or telephone. Contact your doctor or SUD treatment provider for more information
- If you think you are at risk for relapse, Recovery Support Services may help. Call the Los Angeles County Substance Abuse Service Helpline (SASH) toll-free for more information.



Resources:

- Los Angeles County Department of [Public Health Coronavirus site](#): or call 2-1-1 for more information.
- Los Angeles County Substance Abuse Service Helpline (SASH): 1-844-804-7500
- Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Access Center 24/7 Helpline: 1-800-854-7771
- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [National Helpline](#) 1-800-662-HELP (4357).
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)
- Contact your [local substance use disorder treatment](#) center. They remain open during COVID-19.

Tips for your general well-being

- ▶ Practice mindfulness, meditation or other activities that keep your mind centered on the present moment.
 - 10-Minute Guided Meditation (audio) - [Headspace](#) is free for Los Angeles County residents
- ▶ Physical activity gives the day a structured routine, relieves stress, and improves blood circulation and physical health. Exercise you can do during social/physical distancing can include running, walking, yoga, or participating in online exercise videos.
 - Physical Activity Tips (videos), [Champions for Change](#)
- ▶ Be of service to others by checking in with a loved one or a neighbor that may need support or assistance with getting groceries, medications, etc. People in recovery understand that when you help others, you are also helping yourself.
- ▶ Keep a journal to write in and give yourself a healthy outlet for your thoughts and feelings.