ADHD and alcohol

Understanding my patterns without shame

There can be a connection

ADHD and alcohol problems can occur together. Having ADHD does not mean you will develop an addiction. If both are affecting your life, you deserve support that considers both.

What am I hoping alcohol will do?

Some people describe drinking to quiet a busy mind, settle restlessness or feel more comfortable around others. Notice what you hope for and what actually happens. Alcohol is not a treatment for ADHD.

Look at your own experience

Do urges show up when you are bored, overwhelmed, frustrated or trying to switch off? These are prompts for reflection, not proof of ADHD. You can explore them with a counsellor whether or not you have a diagnosis.

Ask for support with the whole picture

Tell your clinician about attention, daily functioning, drinking, sleep and any medicines you take. ADHD assessment and treatment need individual clinical advice. Do not stop or change prescribed medication on your own.

Before you change your drinking

If you drink heavily or regularly, need alcohol to feel steady, or have had withdrawal before, speak with a doctor before stopping or sharply reducing. Alcohol withdrawal can be life-threatening. Shaking, sweating or feeling unwell after cutting down needs prompt medical advice. Call 000 for seizures, severe confusion or hallucinations.

Australia: Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline 1800 250 015 (free, confidential advice). Lifeline 13 11 14 (24/7 crisis support). Call 000 if there is immediate danger or a medical emergency.

Make it personal

Write a few words. You can leave questions blank or talk them through with someone.

A situation when I want to drink...

What I hope drinking will change...

What tends to happen afterwards...

One safer way to meet that need, with support...

What I want to discuss with a clinician...

You do not have to do this alone.

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Inspired by The Freedom Room blog: thefreedomroom.com.au/the-link-between-adhd-and-addiction/. Clinical background: nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/adhd-what-you-need-to-know; adhdguideline.aadpa.com.au/adhd-and-substance-use-disorders/. Safety and support: healthdirect.gov.au/alcoholism; adf.org.au/insights/safely-withdrawing-alcohol/; lifeline.org.au/131114; medicarementalhealth.gov.au/provider/national-alcohol-and-other-drug-hotline-16469. Checked 1 October 2026.