



Harm Minimisation and COVID-19

COVID-19 is a difficult time that can bring up feelings of loneliness and boredom. During this time, it may be hard to avoid using unhealthy substances and drugs to cope. We encourage you to seek support from your Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Worker at any time to help you stop using substances, but if you are using substances, it's important to take care of yourself and minimise harm to yourself or others as much as possible.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a new strain of Coronavirus. It has spread all over the world and can cause serious illness, especially for people living with a chronic health condition.

Have I got COVID-19 or am I having withdrawals?

Common symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, sore throat, coughing and/or shortness of breath.

If you are having a withdrawal, you might experience similar symptoms of feeling hot and sweaty, increased heart rate, rapid breathing, nausea, vomiting, and/or anxiety.

If you are feeling unwell, call your AMS immediately, or if it is an emergency – call 000.

- COVID-19 infection may worsen breathing impacts of substances and drugs including opioids, benzodiazepine and alcohol.
- Opioid and/or alcohol withdrawal may cause or worsen breathing difficulties.
- Smoking can make breathing problems worse.

How can I get clean injecting equipment during COVID-19?

For clean injecting equipment, contact:

- Your local NSP provider
- NSW Users and AIDS association (NUAA) on **(02) 8354 7300** or **1800 644 413** or visit nuaa.org.au
- Get in contact with your local chemist, or doctor about your Opioid Treatment Plan (OTP). Some regulations have changed around the amount of take away you can take home during lockdown.
- To reduce the symptoms of withdrawals during this time, talk to your mates about what might happen if drug supply is cut.
- Don't forget to reach out to a health professional and/or AOD worker for help if you're going through withdrawals.

How can I minimise harm during COVID-19?

- Stay in contact with your AOD Worker
- Wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and water before and after needle usage.
- Make sure that you are prepared and have your treatment medication on hand.
- If you are an opioid user, make sure that you are prepared and have naloxone available in case of overdose. You can pick up naloxone from your local pharmacy, or your Harm Reduction Worker.
- Keep your preparation and surfaces clean with microbial wipes, alcohol (at least 70%) or bleach to prevent any potential infection.
- Social distancing means keeping a safe distance away from others, but it doesn't mean social isolation. You can follow social distancing practices and have a yarn with your brothers and sisters over the phone or video call.
- Most Importantly, look after yourself and stay safe.