



**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY**  
Student Wellness Services



# **Coping during Covid**

**SAFER SUBSTANCE USE**

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to disrupt our lives, and the majority of students are studying from home, it is normal to feel stress, boredom, loneliness and anxiety.

However, at elevated levels for prolonged periods of time, some people turn to alcohol or drugs to manage, which may appear to help reduce these negative feelings at first; but using substances as a way to cope can result in feeling worse, increase the risk of dependency and negative health effects, and delay recovery from stress and anxiety.



# Check in with yourself

If you are noticing that your relationship with substances has changed, ask yourself:

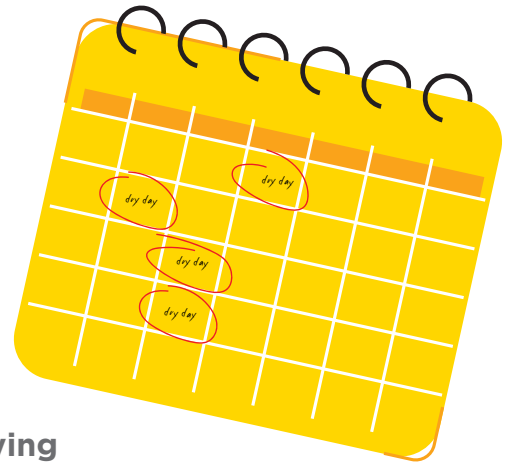
- How is it impacting my mood, behaviours, relationships, concentration, and sleep habits?
- Am I spending more money on alcohol and drugs than before the pandemic?
- Am I noticing that my tolerance has increased (that I'm consuming more to feel the effects)?
- Why do I want to drink or use substances? Is it because I'm bored, lonely, or stressed?
- Am I replacing one substance for another, like alcohol for cannabis?
- Am I using substances alone, where I wasn't before the pandemic?
- Has using substances become my "go to" to handle difficult emotions?
- Am I prioritizing using substances over school, work, or relationships?



# Tips for safer substance use

If you do use substances:

- Avoid stockpiling alcohol, cannabis, and other substances.
- Try and incorporate “dry days” throughout the week where you don’t consume drugs or alcohol.
- Keep a schedule and track your drinks. Apps like **Saying When** can help keep track and set goals.
- Dilute your drinks with water or juice and alternate with non-alcoholic drinks.
- Don’t share drink containers, glasses, drugs, and drug equipment, as COVID-19 can be transferred this way. Make sure you are washing your hands regularly before and after use.
- Avoid using substances alone. If using alone is unavoidable, arrange to have someone do a safety check, leave doors unlocked for easy access, and establish a safety plan with supports.
- Have a naloxone kit available. Supplies are available at **Varsity Pharmacy**, **Sheldon Chumir Health Centre**, as well as most pharmacies across Canada.
- Drug test strips are available at Student Wellness Services, Varsity Pharmacy, and Campus Residence. Contact [yasmeen.nosshi@ucalgary.ca](mailto:yasmeen.nosshi@ucalgary.ca) for more information.





## Take care of yourself

Find healthy ways to cope with stress and anxiety:

- Take breaks from the news and social media as repeatedly hearing or reading about the pandemic can be distressing.
- Connect with others virtually, and organize a games or activity night (you can do a live virtual cooking lesson or book a magician!)
- Take care of your body and mind by practicing mindfulness or meditation, going for walks/exercising, and eating healthy meals.
- Try journaling as an intentional practice that can support building awareness of our thoughts and feelings.
- Check out the events or workshops offered at **Student Wellness Services**, such as **Safer Substance Use: Harm Reduction 101** or **virtual board games** hosted by The Hub.



# Reach out for support

If you or someone that you know needs additional support:

- The University of Calgary Student Wellness Services has a variety of supports available, including connecting with the harm reduction support advisor at [yasmeen.nosshi@ucalgary.ca](mailto:yasmeen.nosshi@ucalgary.ca)
- Check out the **Low Risk Drinking Guidelines** and other resources available at the **Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse**.
- Connect to an online support group, like **AA** or **SMART Recovery**.
- **Together All** is a clinically moderated, online peer-to-peer mental health community that empowers individuals in Alberta to anonymously seek and provide support 24/7 free of charge.
- **Wellness Together** Canada is a free online mental health and substance use support resource.
- *Alberta Addiction Helpline*  
1-866-332-2322



## References

Alberta Health Services. (2021). Virtual Mental Health.

Retrieved from [albertahealthservices.ca/amh/Page17137.aspx](https://albertahealthservices.ca/amh/Page17137.aspx)

Coping with Stress, Anxiety, And Substance Use During Covid-19 [infographic]. (2020).

Retrieved from [ccsa.ca/coping-stress-anxiety-and-substance-use-during-covid-19-infographic](https://ccsa.ca/coping-stress-anxiety-and-substance-use-during-covid-19-infographic)

Coping with stress and anxiety. (2020). Retrieved from [camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19/coping-with-stress-and-anxiety](https://camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19/coping-with-stress-and-anxiety)