

ALCOHOL AND COVID-19

IN THE AMERICAS

Alcohol is often used for socialization

and by some to cope with difficult emotions such as anxiety, fear, depression, boredom, and uncertainty, all of which increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in increased alcohol consumption, especially among those who were already drinking in excess.



FACT 1:

Alcohol poses many acute and chronic risks to health and is associated with an increased risk of weakening the immune system which can make individuals more susceptible to contracting infectious diseases, including COVID-19.

FACT 2:

Alcohol consumption may intensify fear, anxiety, or depression, especially when people are in isolation, and should not be used as a coping strategy to deal with stress.

FACT 3:

Alcohol consumption is a risk factor for acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), one of the most severe complications of COVID-19.

FACT 4:

Online sales and home deliveries increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic in several countries. Online marketing, especially through social media, increased as well, including the promotion of drinking to youth.

FACT 5:

Misinformation about alcohol use and COVID-19 spread during the pandemic. However:



IT IS NOT TRUE THAT:

Consuming alcohol destroys the COVID-19 virus.



IT IS NOT TRUE THAT:

Drinking strong alcohol kills the virus in the inhaled air.



IT IS NOT TRUE THAT:

Alcohol stimulates immunity and resistance to the virus.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Alcohol is not a healthy product.** It does not protect against COVID-19 and it may exacerbate your risk of contracting and having complications from COVID-19 infection.
- **Do not begin using alcohol to cope with feelings of sadness, anxiety, and fears during the pandemic.** Your consumption may increase, and it may become difficult to stop or reduce your consumption when you want to.
- **If you drink, drink less.** Do not start drinking to feel better or to improve your mental health.
- **Be a role model and avoid intoxication** when kids are around. Talk to them about their exposure to alcohol marketing on social media and how it can influence them.

Sources:

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- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. The effect of COVID-19 on alcohol consumption, and policy responses to prevent harmful alcohol consumption. Paris: OECD Publishing; 2021.
- Valente JY, Sohi I, Garcia-Cerde R, Monteiro MG, Sanchez ZM. What is associated with the increased frequency of heavy episodic drinking during the COVID-19 pandemic? Data from the PAHO regional web-based survey. *Drug Alcohol Depend.* 2021;221:108621. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2021.108621>

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