

Fact Sheet

Safe partying for all ages

Introduction

Parties are an important way for people to socialise, celebrate and have fun. Whether you are hosting or attending a party it is important to be safe. No one wants their party ruined by drunken behaviour, property being damaged, or someone being injured.

People hosting parties in rural and remote communities may need to consider additional issues when planning a party, such as the distance people have to travel to get there. In some areas it is difficult to get people together due to the distances they may have to travel and limited transport options. This can mean that parties are viewed as an opportunity not to be wasted and people may over celebrate by drinking too much alcohol.

This fact sheet outlines some tips that both the host and the people attending the party can use to help them have a safe and enjoyable party.

Tips for hosting a party

When hosting a party you need to do all that you can to make the party safe. If anything goes wrong at the party, or even after the party, and you have not taken care to prevent this, you could be held liable. Careful planning of your party can help reduce the risk of problems occurring and ensure everyone has a great time.

Legal and insurance issues

- › **Where is the party being held?** Local laws may restrict the consumption of alcohol in public places.
- › **Young people and alcohol.** If people aged under 18 years are attending the party will they be consuming alcohol? Laws relating to young people and alcohol can vary depending on the location of the party. A number of states in Australia have laws that make it an offence for a person to supply alcohol to someone who is aged under 18 on private property without parental consent. Find out more about secondary supply laws. Always check the laws in your area with your local police, community legal service, or council or shire office.
- › **Noise levels and disturbing the neighbours.** All states and territories have laws that set out acceptable noise levels. Contact your local police, local council or the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) to find out more. It is also a good idea to test your sound system to see how far the noise carries and notify your neighbours about the party.
- › **Liability insurance.** Find out what your policy covers.

Type of party

- › **Who is invited?** The type of guests invited will influence a range of decisions about the type of party. For example, a children's party will require different planning than a party for older teenagers and a party aimed at adults will have different requirements than one aimed at families.
- › **How will you be informing guests about the party?** For some types of parties, written invitations send a message that the party is for invited guests only. Including a request to RSVP can help with planning. If the party is for younger people the invitation provides a first point of contact with other parents.
- › **Where is the party being held?** Will people have to drive there? How many people will it hold comfortably? Is it an open space or are there gates and doors you can use to monitor who is coming and going?
- › **How will it be catered for?** Will you be supplying food and drinks or is it BYO? If people will be drinking alcohol ensure there is food and plenty of low and non-alcohol alternatives.
- › **Will you need security?** You may wish to consider organising security to help at the party. The Victoria Police have a Partysafe initiative that encourages people to register their party with their local police station. This means that the police already have all the information they need to know about the party just in case something goes wrong and they need to be called.
- › **Transport and accommodation arrangements.** In rural and remote areas where long distances are involved, public transport and taxi services may be limited. Think about how people will be getting home and who is driving. What if they are affected by alcohol or too tired to drive safely? You may need to have spare bedding available for guests who need to stay overnight.

At the party

- › **Setting up the venue.** How a party is set up can influence guests' behaviour and assist with security. Place food where people gather but keep the alcohol serving area small and away from crowded areas. Is the bathroom easy to access? Is there a single entry and exit point to make security easier?
- › **Ensure food is promoted and easily accessible all the time.** Eating can slow the pace of drinking, fill people up so they are less likely to drink, and slow down the process of getting drunk.
- › **Monitor alcohol consumption.** Only serve alcoholic drinks on request and do not let anyone go around topping up alcoholic drinks. Consider having a person who is not drinking in charge of the bar area who can help control the amount of alcohol consumed.

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- › **Keep people entertained.** Activities such as a pool table, table soccer, dance music, karaoke, games, and movies can keep people entertained and take the focus off drinking.
- › **Dealing with problem behaviour.** Try talking to the person in private, offer them food and alternatives to alcohol or see if a friend can influence them. When refusing to serve them any more alcohol try to keep calm and avoid getting into an argument.
- › **Plan for emergencies.** Have a list of important phone numbers such as 000, the police, nearest medical centre and taxi services near the telephone and make sure you know how to cope with basic emergencies.

Tips for partygoers

When going to a party, there are a number of things you can do to ensure that you and your friends have an enjoyable and safe time. Many of these are linked to the safe and sensible consumption of alcohol. When too much alcohol is consumed drunken behaviour can spoil a party.

Getting to and from the party safely

- › **Drinking and driving.** If you are planning on drinking don't drive. Organise a lift with a person who is not going to be drinking or stay with the hosts of the party.
- › **Don't drive when tired.** If you are tired or have to travel long distances consider organising to stay overnight with the hosts of the party.

Look out for one another

- › **Respect peoples decisions not to drink and do not encourage risky drinking behaviours.** Drinking in rounds, drinking competitions or games can encourage people to drink more alcohol than is safe.
- › **Have they had too much to drink?** If a friend has had too much to drink, encourage them to stop drinking alcohol and switch to non-alcohol alternatives. Make sure they are OK and if they are vomiting don't leave them alone. If you think an ambulance is needed, don't hesitate to call one.
- › **Getting home safely.** If a person has been drinking or is tired do not let them drive home.

Hints for drinking less

- › **Have a 'spacer' every couple of drinks.** Start with a non-alcoholic drink to quench your thirst before you start drinking alcohol and have a non-alcoholic drink every second or third drink.
- › **Pace yourself.** Take sips, not gulps and drink at your own pace not someone else's. This means trying to avoid drinking in rounds where you are trying to keep up with the fastest drinker. If you are in a round, drink a low or nonalcohol drink.
- › **Use a smaller glass.** Try drinking smaller glasses of beer or wine and make them last longer.
- › **Don't let people top up your drink.** Always finish your drink before getting a new one, this helps you keep track of how much alcohol you have consumed.
- › **Avoid drinking high-alcohol content drinks—try the low alcohol alternative.** The number of standard drinks contained in an alcoholic beverage is listed on the side of the can or bottle. Some cans may contain over two standard drinks. If mixing your own drinks, use less alcohol than normal.
- › **Eat before and while you are drinking.** Eating slows your drinking pace and fills you up. If you have a full stomach, alcohol will be absorbed more slowly. But avoid the salty snacks as they make you thirsty, so you drink more.
- › **Don't just sit and drink—stay busy.** Play pool, dance, or talk to friends. If you have something to do, you tend to drink less.
- › **Don't be pressured into drinking more than you want or intend to.** It's OK to say no.



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1300 85 85 84



druginfo@adf.org.au

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Level 12, 607 Bourke Street Melbourne | PO Box 818 North Melbourne Victoria Australia 3051
Phone 03 9611 6100 | Fax 03 8672 5983 | adf@adf.org.au | www.adf.org.au | ABN 66 057 731 192

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