



ALCOHOL, MEDICATION, AND DRUG USE AFTER A DISASTER

After a disaster, the use of alcohol, prescription medication or other substances may increase. Some people feel that using drugs and alcohol helps them escape bad feelings or physical symptoms related to stress responses (e.g., headaches, muscle tension).

Increased alcohol and substance use can make these things worse in the long term. It interrupts natural sleep cycles, creates health problems, and interferes with relationships. There also a potential for dependence on the substance.

If your alcohol or drug use has increased since the disaster or is causing problems for you, it is important to recognize the problem and seek help.

Managing alcohol, medication, and drug use

- Pay attention to any change in your use of alcohol and/or drugs.
- Consult with a healthcare professional about safe ways to reduce anxiety, depression, muscle tension, and sleep deprivation.
- Correctly use prescription and over-the-counter medication as indicated.
- Eat well, exercise, and get enough sleep.
- Seek out support from your family and friends.
- If you believe you have a problem with substance abuse, talk to your doctor or other health care professional.

If you have had an alcohol, medication, or drug problem in the past

For people who have successfully stopped drinking or using drugs, experiencing a disaster can sometimes result in strong urges to drink or use again. Sometimes it can lead them to strengthen their commitment to recovery. Whatever your experience, it is important to consciously choose to stay in recovery.

- Increase your attendance at substance abuse support groups.

- Talk with family and friends about supporting you to avoid use of alcohol or substances.
- If you are receiving disaster crisis counseling, talk to your counselor about your past alcohol/drug abuse.
- If you have a 12-step sponsor or substance abuse counselor, talk to him/her about your situation.
- Increase your use of other supports that have helped you avoid relapse in the past.
- If you have been forced to move out of your local community, talk to disaster workers about helping to locate nearby alcohol or drug recovery groups, or ask them to help organize a support group.