

Safer Substance Use during Term Break

If you decide to drink or use substances during term break, knowing the associated risks can help reduce some of the potential harm. Consider some of these guidelines to keep yourself safe.

- Plan ahead. Bring a set amount of money to a bar or club, or a set amount of alcohol for pre-drinking occasions.
- Set a limit and stop drinking after a specified amount. You can ask friends to help monitor your consumption.
- Be mindful of the fact that pre-drinking is riskier because you are in an uncontrolled environment and there is greater potential to overindulge over the span of the evening.
- Alternating alcohol with non-alcoholic drinks, or dilute your drinks with water or juice.
- It's okay to slow down if you find you're getting intoxicated quickly or drinking more than usual.
- Consider switching to drinks with less alcohol per volume. Drinking beer instead of wine, or wine instead of hard liquor, can help you to pace yourself more easily.
- Avoid mixing drugs with alcohol as it increases the risk of higher impairment.
- Don't leave your drinks unattended, or have a trusted friend keep an eye on them.
- If you feel pressure to drink, drink non-alcoholic drinks that could mask as alcohol, such as non-alcoholic beers or mocktails.
- Apps like [Saying When](#) provide an interactive way to help people understand when and why they drink, as well as track their drinking.
- Check out the [Low Risk Guidelines](#) made available at the Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse to get a better idea of your risk level and assess your drinking.
- If you're smoking cannabis, consider choosing products with a higher CBD to THC ratio to reduce some risks. Avoid "deep inhalation" or "breath-holding" because while these practices are meant to increase psychoactive experiences, they also increase the amount of toxic material absorbed by your body.
- Exercise caution when eating or drinking products (edibles) containing 2.5 mg to 10 mg of THC. It can take up to 4 hours to feel the full effects and consuming more within this time period can increase the risk of adverse effects.
- If you're using opioids illicitly, try to use small doses at a time, use in the presence of people you trust, use clean and sanitized equipment, have a naloxone kit (available at [Safeworks](#), [Sheldon Chumir Health Centre](#), as well as Calgary area [pharmacies](#)), and consider using in a [supervised consumption site](#).
- Know the signs of an [overdose](#).
- Make a plan to get home safely and encourage your friends to do the same. Cabs, Uber, public transit, or designated drivers are options to make sure you have safe ride home.

- Understand the reasons why you're using substances. If it's to fill the time or boredom during isolation, consider something else to replace that, like going for a run, calling a friend, or connecting with a new online community.

Do you have any tips or suggestions that you have found to helpful when using substances while on break? If so, send them to yasmeen.nosshi@ucalgary.ca

For some more information visit our safer substance use [page](#).

If you or someone you know is struggling with substance use, contact the UCalgary Harm Reduction Support Advisor yasmeen.nosshi@ucalgary.ca, or contact the Alberta Health Services Addiction Helpline at 1-866-332-2322.

References

Health Canada (2019, June 14). Government of Canada. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/healthcanada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/resources/lower-your-risks.html>

Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (n.d.) from <https://www.ccsa.ca/>

Post-Secondary Partnership: Alcohol Harms. (n.d.) Heavy Episodic Drinking Report. Retrieved from <https://pepah.ca/heavy-episodic-drinking-report/>