

# DON'T DIVE INTO BOOZE



THE TRUTH ABOUT ALCOHOL

ONE DRINK.  
FIVE DESTINATIONS

SICKNESS  
PRISON  
ADDICTION  
ROAD ACCIDENT  
POVERTY

## “The Truth About Alcohol: What You Need to Know”



### “Not all drinks are harmless. Know the risks before you sip.”

Although alcohol is sold openly and often seen as harmless, it is just as dangerous as other psychoactive and toxic substances, such as cocaine or marijuana. Its effects silently damage the brain and body, and no level of alcohol use is entirely safe. What often begins as “just a drink” can lead to dependency, disease, or death.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Why This Booklet?

Let's be real, alcohol is everywhere. From parties and holidays to "just one drink" with friends, it's easy to think drinking is no big deal. Alcohol is one of the most commonly used substances in the world, and in Guyana, it's part of many social gatherings, celebrations, and everyday life.

But here's the truth: alcohol isn't just another drink. It's a substance that changes how your brain works, how your body feels, and how you make decisions. The earlier you start drinking, the higher your risk of serious problems later, from addiction and accidents to broken relationships and lost opportunities.

As a teen or young adult, your brain and body are still developing. Alcohol can interfere with memory, focus, and decision-making, increasing the risk of accidents, addiction, and poor mental health. It can also make it easier to fall into situations that change your life in ways you didn't expect.

This booklet is designed to help you understand the truth about alcohol, what it does, why people use it, and how you can make smarter, safer choices. It's not about judging or lecturing; it's about giving you real information so that you can stay in control, protect your health, and stay on track with your goals.

Your future's too valuable to gamble for a buzz that fades in minutes. Know the facts, think smart, and make choices that keep you moving forward, not looking back.

The choices you make today will shape your tomorrow. Knowing the facts helps you make the right ones.

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

This booklet is more than just information, it's a wake-up call. Too many lives are being quietly damaged by alcohol, a substance that hides behind social acceptance while causing lasting harm to families, health, and future generations.

At the Customs Anti Narcotic Unit, we believe prevention is as powerful as enforcement. Stopping the spread of addiction begins with truth... the truth about what alcohol really does to your body, your mind, and your potential. Through this publication, we aim to give our young people and communities the knowledge and confidence to make stronger choices.

Each time you decide to stay sober, you make a stand for your health, your family, and your country. Together, we can build a generation that refuses to let alcohol define their story.



**James Singh**  
Director  
**Customs Anti Narcotic Unit**  
**(CANU)**



## A GLOBAL AND LOCAL WAKE-UP CALL

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) warn that even moderate drinking carries health risks, increasing the chances of cancer, heart disease, and injury. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that over a billion people worldwide drink at harmful levels.

In Guyana, alcohol consumption continues to fuel traffic fatalities, domestic violence, and mental health issues. The December 15th, 2024, accident at Tuschen, East Bank Essequibo, where two pedestrians tragically lost their lives, remains a stark reminder of how quickly alcohol turns celebration into devastation.

Among youth, the Global School-Based Student Health Survey (GSHS) revealed that nearly one in three students reported drinking alcohol, with many admitting to binge drinking. Early exposure like this sets the stage for lifelong addiction, poor academic performance, and risky behaviours. These trends underscore the urgent need for stronger prevention, education, and family involvement.

### Key Global Alcohol Use Stats & Trends



Let's be honest, drinking is common almost everywhere. But behind parties and social posts, the global numbers tell a different story.

**People drink more than you think:** On average, every person over 15



years old drinks about 5.5 litres of pure alcohol a year. That's a lot, and it includes beer, wine, rum, and everything in between.



**A big chunk of alcohol isn't even officially sold:** Around 1 out of every 5 drinks people consume comes from homemade or unrecorded alcohol, stuff that's often stronger or unsafe.



**Alcohol is behind millions of deaths every year:** In 2019 alone, alcohol caused about 2.6 million deaths worldwide. That includes accidents, liver disease, violence, and even cancer.

**Over a billion people drink at harmful levels:** About 1.34 billion people drink in ways that damage their health and lives.

(Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation)

**For regular drinkers, “just two drinks a day” adds up fast:** The global average is about 27 grams of pure alcohol daily, roughly two standard drinks.

**Alcohol hurts more than it helps:** It’s linked to over 200 health problems, from liver damage and heart disease to accidents and mental health issues.

**Young adults are at higher risk:** For people aged 15–49, alcohol is one of the top causes of death and disability worldwide, especially among men.

### Conclusion: The Truth Beneath the Bottle

Alcohol isn’t just a drink, it’s a global public health threat hiding in plain sight. Every glass poured comes with invisible costs: **lost lives, broken families, and fading futures.** The data make it clear that what many consider “moderate” or “social” drinking is silently destroying health, fueling violence, and stealing potential across generations.



Guyana’s reality mirrors the world’s crisis: too many young people starting early, too many families grieving preventable deaths, too many bright minds dulled before their time. From the Tuschen tragedy to rising mental health struggles, alcohol’s footprint is everywhere, on our roads, in our homes, and in our hospitals.

**This isn’t just about awareness, it’s about action.**

To change the story, we must challenge the culture that normalises alcohol, strengthen our schools and families, and invest in prevention, not just punishment. Every person, every community, every leader has a role to play.

**Because when we reduce alcohol harm, we don’t just save lives, we reclaim futures.**

## ALCOHOL USE IN GUYANA: WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING

You've probably seen alcohol around, at parties, family events, or even on social media. But what's the real story about drinking in Guyana? The stats paint a picture that's worth paying attention to.

### Recent Data & Trends



#### Most people who start drinking keep drinking.

A 2025 study found that 80% of people who have ever used alcohol drank again within the past year. That means once drinking becomes part of your routine, it's hard to stop.

#### "Heavy drinking" is more common than you think.

About 16% of people said they've had six or more drinks in one sitting, which experts call Heavy Episodic Drinking (HED).

Among those who had a drink in the past month, over 40% admitted to binge drinking.



#### Young men are drinking the most.

The study found that younger males are the group most likely to drink heavily or binge.



#### Drinking habits differ across communities.

The Demerara-Mahaica region had the highest drinking rate, around 86%.

### Drinking is linked to health problems.

People who reported heavy drinking were more likely to have high blood pressure, obesity, and elevated triglycerides. All signs of heart and health risk.



### What About Youth?

It's not just adults; drinking starts early for many.

About 39% of teens aged 13–15 said they drank alcohol in the last 30 days.

Around 29% said they've been drunk at least once in their life.

(Pan American Journal / PMC)

That's nearly 4 out of 10 students who already have experience with it, a risky start, given how it affects brain growth, judgment, and future habits.

### Media Influence

The 2019–20 National Survey also showed that the more teens and young adults are exposed to alcohol on TV, radio, and the internet, the more likely they are to drink.

(Guyana Bureau of Statistics / Frontiers)



# ALCOHOL USE IN GUYANA

isn't just a social habit, it is **a growing public-health concern.**

The data paints a clear picture: drinking often begins early, becomes routine fast, and quietly harms the body and mind long before the damage shows. From rising rates of heavy drinking among young men to the normalisation of alcohol in the media, the trend is moving in the wrong direction.

If these patterns continue unchecked, today's casual drinking culture could become tomorrow's national health crisis.

Breaking the cycle starts with awareness, honest conversations, and stronger choices, especially among youth who can still change the story.

## SHORT-TERM RISKS

*Even one night of drinking can change your life or end it. These are the short-term dangers that hit fast, often before you realise what's happening.*

### Accidents: drunk driving, drowning, falls, fights.

Alcohol slows your reaction time and blurs your vision, which is why so many crashes and drownings happen after “just a few drinks.” A drunk driver may think they’re fine until a turn comes too fast, or a child crosses the road. Many fights, falls, and fatal slips at parties or riversides happen because someone’s balance and judgment are off. In Guyana, several road deaths every year are linked directly to drinking.



### Bad decisions: unsafe sex, violence, crime.

Under the influence, your brain’s self-control switch shuts down. You take risks you’d never take sober, unsafe sex, arguments that turn violent, or getting involved in crime without even realising how deep you’re in. Alcohol gives false courage and zero caution, and the results can follow you for life: infections, pregnancy, jail time, or deep regret.



### Alcohol poisoning: too much, too fast can stop breathing or heartbeat.

Drinking too much, too fast, can overload your body. The liver can’t keep up, and alcohol starts shutting down vital organs.

When someone passes out and doesn’t wake up, it’s not “just sleep”, it could be alcohol poisoning, a medical emergency. Breathing slows, the heartbeat weakens, and body temperature drops dangerously low. Without quick help, they can die within minutes. Never leave a drunk friend alone; call for help immediately.



### Embarrassment: texts/calls you regret, blackouts you don't remember.

People often laugh about “funny drunk moments,” but they forget the shame that follows. Alcohol blurs memory, you might send texts, post videos, or say things you don’t remember the next day. You could wake up to screenshots, fights, or rumours that stick for years. Losing control might seem harmless in the moment, but once it’s online or spreads through your community, you can’t take it back.



## LONG-TERM DAMAGE

**Addiction:** Drinking young increases the risk of alcohol use disorder later.

Starting to drink or use substances when you're young can change how your brain's reward system works. This makes it easier to go from only using on weekends to feeling like you need it to deal with stress or feelings. Over time, your body gets used to it (you need more to get the same effect), cravings happen, and quitting becomes more difficult. This isn't just a bad habit, it's a health issue called alcohol use disorder that can hurt your health, relationships, finances, and freedom.



**Addiction**

**Brain:** Memory problems, trouble concentrating, slowed learning.

Alcohol damages thinking skills. You'll observe memory lapses, slower reactions, difficulty concentrating at school or work, and weaker decision-making. Over time, heavy consumption can reduce the size of important brain regions involved in learning and self-control. In simple terms, "studying becomes more difficult, tasks take longer, and errors increase".



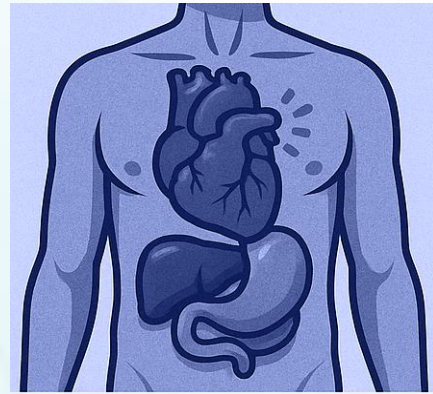
**Brain**

**Body:** Liver damage, heart disease, stomach ulcers.

The liver is like a big cleaning station in your body. If it gets fatty, it can turn into hepatitis, and then into cirrhosis, which permanently scars the liver. Since the liver's job is to clean your blood, when it's hurt, toxins start to build up, and that can make you feel really sick overall.

Heart problems like high blood pressure, irregular beats, and a weak heart can increase your chances of having a stroke or heart failure. Stay healthy and take care of your heart!

Your stomach and gut can get inflamed or develop ulcers that might bleed. You could also experience reflux (like heartburn) and trouble absorbing nutrients from food. This can make you feel tired, weak, or sick more often.



**Body**

**Future:** Ruined opportunities from arrests, suspensions, or failed grades.

Alcohol leaves a paper trail: arrests, suspensions, bad grades, missed work, lost licenses. It can ruin your chances for scholarships, jobs, visas, and promotions. Rumours about being drunk spread fast in small towns," One crazy story can ruin your reputation for good".



**Future**

**The bottom line:** drinking alcohol can cost you opportunities you haven't even earned yet.

## WHAT ALCOHOL REALLY DOES

Alcohol doesn't just make you "feel good." It changes your body, your judgment, and your future, often in ways you don't notice until it's too late. At first, it seems harmless: a drink at a lime, a celebration, or "just one to relax." But alcohol doesn't come alone; it brings danger, regret, and destruction disguised as fun.



Take  
and

the Tuschen tragedy, for example, a night that started with laughter and ended in flashing lights sirens. A young man who thought he was fine to drive lost control, killing himself and two innocent passengers. That single moment didn't just end lives, it broke families. Somewhere in Tuschen, a child still asks why their father never came home. A mother still waits for a son she'll never see again. This is the real cost of "just a drink."

Every sip of alcohol affects how your brain works. It slows your reactions, blurs your vision, and tricks you into thinking you're in control. But you're not. The same drink that makes you laugh can make you reckless. The same drink that makes you feel brave can make you violent or careless. Alcohol changes how you think, speak, and act, turning good moments into life-changing mistakes.

And it doesn't stop there, alcohol silently claims lives every single day across the world. Behind every bottle are stories of heartbreak and loss:

- A father who never got to walk his daughter down the aisle.
- A mother who never lived to see her child's first steps.
- A teenager whose future ended on a dark, rain-soaked road.

Each tragedy is a reminder that alcohol doesn't just take health, it takes moments, memories, and lives that can never be replaced.

Alcohol is a silent destroyer. It damages your liver, weakens your heart, increases cancer risk, and dulls your mind. It feeds accidents, domestic abuse, depression, and broken homes. It doesn't matter if you're rich, poor, young, or old, it takes anyone who lets it in too far.

We often hear, "Drink responsibly." But here's the truth: no level of alcohol use is completely safe. What starts as "just one drink" can turn into a habit, and that habit can turn into dependency. Alcohol doesn't ask permission before it takes over your life. It just waits for one more party, one more excuse, one more "I'm fine."

So, when someone says, "It's just alcohol," remember the stories that didn't end well. Remember the Tuschen crash. Remember the families left behind. Remember the nights

that ended in tears instead of laughter. Alcohol doesn't just change your mood, it changes your destiny.

# CASE STUDY

## The Tuschen Tragedy



### *Real consequences. Real lives lost.*

In the early hours of December 15, 2024, a high speed crash along the Tuschen Public Road, East Bank Essequibo; claimed the lives of two pedestrians who were simply crossing the street. The driver, reportedly under the influence of alcohol, lost control of the vehicle after the collision, striking another car before coming to a stop nearly 100 yards away. Both victims were pronounced dead at the scene. Subsequent tests confirmed alcohol was present in the driver's system. This was not just another accident, it was a preventable tragedy. A night that began with "just a few drinks" ended in death, grief, and destruction. The Tuschen incident stands as a stark reminder that alcohol-impaired driving continues to devastate families and communities across Guyana every year.

### **Key Takeaways:**

- Impaired driving remains one of the leading causes of road fatalities nationwide.
- Alcohol slows reflexes, impairs judgment, and magnifies risk, even at low levels.
- Every decision to drive after drinking puts lives on the line, including your own.

## THE CHAIN REACTION OF DRINKING

One drink might seem harmless. But alcohol doesn't stop at once. It sets off a chain reaction that flips your entire life upside down before you even realise it.

It starts simple: one drink to relax, one to fit in, one to celebrate. Then your body starts craving the calm, the buzz, the escape. Your mind tells you that you need it to have fun, to forget, or to feel confident. And suddenly, something that felt like a choice starts to feel like a need.

When alcohol enters your body, it goes straight to your brain, slowing down how you think and react. That's why people under the influence make choices they'd never make sober. The laugh turns into a fight. The party turns into a crash. The moment of fun turns into a lifetime of regret.

### Every stage has consequences:

- Poor judgment leads to risky behaviour, such as fights, unsafe driving, or unwanted situations.
- Loss of control turns confidence into recklessness.
- Physical damage begins silently: liver strain, stomach ulcers, heart stress, and memory loss.
- Emotional fallout hits next: guilt, depression, broken trust, and damaged relationships.

That's the chain reaction: one event triggering the next, each one worse than before. It's not always instant; sometimes it's months or years later when the effects start to show. But by then, the damage had already been done.

Alcohol doesn't just break bodies; it breaks promises, friendships, and futures. It's a slow thief, taking away little pieces of your health, happiness, and self-respect every time you let it in.

So, when someone hands you a drink and says, "It's just one," remember that every disaster starts somewhere. The chain reaction begins with that first choice, but it can also end with one word: no.

## HOW ALCOHOL HOOKS YOU

### HOW ALCOHOL HOOKS YOU

#### 1. BRAIN WANTS REWARDS



Alcohol releases a chemical that makes the brain think, "I feel great!"

#### 2. YOU DRINK MORE

Soon, one or two drinks isn't enough, so you end up **drinking more** often.



#### 3. BRAIN GETS FOOLED

The brain starts to depend on alcohol to keep **feeling good**.



#### 4. BODY CRAVES ALCOHOL

Without alcohol, you get sick, shaky, and anxious until you drink again.



No one plans to get addicted. No one wakes up one morning and says, "I'm going to lose myself to alcohol." It doesn't happen overnight, it happens quietly, one drink at a time. That's how alcohol hooks you.

At first, it feels harmless. You drink when you're stressed. You drink when you're bored. You drink when everyone else is drinking. But slowly, alcohol starts to take up space in your mind, in your habits, in your life. You begin needing it to relax, to sleep, to talk, to feel okay. That's not fun anymore, that's control.

The body learns fast. The more you drink, the more it adjusts. It starts expecting alcohol, craving it like oxygen. That's when the trap

snaps shut. Suddenly, you're not drinking because you

want to... you're drinking because you have to.

Your brain's reward system, the part that tells you something feels good, gets hijacked. Alcohol floods it with false comfort and fake confidence. You begin to chase that feeling again and again, even though deep down, you know it's destroying you. That's the cruel trick of addiction: it convinces you that the very thing breaking you is what you need to survive.

- And while it's numbing your pain, it's also wrecking your body.
- Your liver struggles to clean your blood and starts to fail.
- Your heart weakens and beats irregularly.
- Your memory fades; faces blur; days disappear.
- Your emotions swing like a pendulum, from laughter to rage, from calm to collapse.

Before long, you're not drinking to have fun, you're drinking just to feel normal. That's when you realise alcohol isn't a friend; it's a parasite that feeds on your peace, your purpose, and your future.

But here's the truth that most people forget: you can break free. Recovery is hard, but it's real. It starts the moment you decide you're done being controlled. The moment you reach out to a friend, a counsellor, a faith leader, or anyone who will listen, you begin to take your life back. Every sober day is a small victory, and those victories add up to freedom.

Because alcohol doesn't define who you are, your choices do. And the strongest choice you can make is to say, "Not today. Not me."

## THE RIPPLE EFFECT: ALCOHOL HURTS MORE THAN JUST YOU

When someone drinks, it's not just their life that changes, it's everyone around them. Like a stone dropped into still water, one person's decision to drink sends out ripples that touch family, friends, and even strangers. The truth is, alcohol doesn't destroy lives in isolation, it drags entire circles down with it.

Think about accidents caused by DUI. They don't just take lives; they leave mothers crying, children without parents, and communities shaken. The hurt didn't end when the sirens stopped. It lingered in hospital rooms, in funeral homes, and in the quiet moments when someone looks at an empty chair and remembers what used to be. That's what alcohol does, it steals joy not only from the drinker but from everyone who loves them.

In homes across Guyana, alcohol has been the start of countless arguments, broken promises, and sleepless nights. A father spends the little he earns on rum instead of groceries. A teenager drinks to escape stress and ends up lost in a pattern of lies and hiding. A friend gets behind the wheel and never makes it home. These aren't just "bad nights", they're lives being rewritten in pain.

### The ripple spreads wider:

- Children grow up afraid or confused, watching someone they love change when they drink.
- Partners lose trust and hope, trying to fix what alcohol keeps breaking.
- Friends pull away, tired of the fights, the excuses, and the guilt.
- Communities lose their safety when drinking fuels accidents, violence, and neglect.



**A**lcohol doesn't only attack your body, it attacks your relationships, your reputation, and your sense of peace. It turns laughter into silence and trust into distance. One person's addiction becomes a community's sorrow.

But here's the flip side: every decision not to drink sends out a positive ripple, too.

When you say no, someone else finds the courage to say no, too. When you stay sober, you show others that strength is louder than pressure. You become the calm in someone else's chaos, the proof that there's another way.

The ripple effect works both ways. One drink can destroy, but one choice can inspire.

You don't have to be the reason someone cries, you can be the reason they heal.



**The bottom line:** Alcohol doesn't just damage your body, it breaks trust, peace, and connection. But the choice to stay sober can rebuild everything it destroyed. Every "no" sends out a ripple of strength. You don't have to be the cause of someone's pain, you can be the start of someone's healing. One choice can change everything.

## THE SOCIAL PRESSURE TRAP

One of the biggest reasons people start drinking isn't curiosity, it's pressure. The idea that you have to drink to fit in, have fun, or look mature is one of the oldest lies in the book.

Alcohol often shows up where there's laughter, music, and friends. But what's really happening when people say, "Just have one"? Let's break down the myths.

### "Everyone's doing it."

False. The truth is, most teens and young adults don't drink. The ones who do are often louder about it, so it seems like everybody's doing it, but they're not.

A lot of smart, confident people say no and still have a great time. They play sports, go out, dance, and laugh "sober". You don't need a bottle to belong. Real friends respect your choices, not pressure you into making bad ones. Standing your ground takes guts, and that's something to be proud of.



### "It makes you cool."

Truth: It doesn't. Losing control isn't cool... It's dangerous.

Being "the one who can't walk straight," "the one everyone had to carry," or "the one who said too much" doesn't make you the life of the party; it makes you the story everyone whispers about later.

What actually is cool? Confidence. Clarity. Being the one who still has their dignity, their safety, and their memories the next morning. The kind of person who knows how to have fun and still keep it together.



## “Just one drink won’t hurt.”

Reality: That’s where it starts.

One drink can lower your inhibitions and blur your thinking. That’s when you say “yes” to things you’d usually say “no” to. That’s when accidents happen, secrets slip out, or risks get taken.

Even one drink can slow your reaction time, mess with your coordination, or make you overconfident, exactly how people end up hurt or in trouble. The “just one” mindset is how many lifelong problems begin.



**The Bottom Line:** Saying no doesn’t make you uptight or scared ...it makes you aware. When you know the traps, you don’t fall for them. And when you choose not to drink, you’re not missing out... you’re taking control of your story.

**EARLY WARNING SIGNS YOU’RE SLIPPING**

*Most people don't realise when alcohol starts taking control. It doesn't happen overnight, it sneaks up. You might still be in school, working, or handling things okay, but the signs are there if you look closely.*

*If these sound familiar, it's time to pause and be honest with yourself.*

## You need more to feel it.



That first drink doesn't hit like it used to. You start drinking faster, stronger, or more often. That's your body building tolerance, a clear red flag.

## You can't have fun without it.

Parties, weekends, hangouts, nothing feels right unless there's alcohol involved. If sober moments start feeling dull, that's not social life, that's dependence forming.



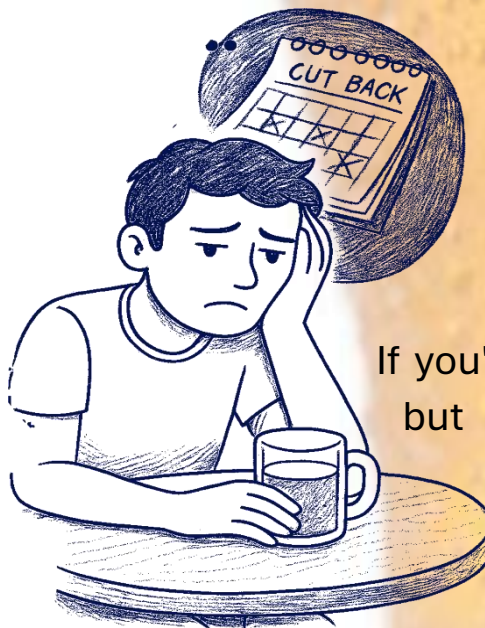


## You hide or downplay your drinking.

Sneaking drinks, lying about how much you had, or hiding bottles means you already know it's a problem, even if you won't say it out loud.

## You feel anxious, angry, or sick without it.

When you skip a drink and suddenly get irritable, shaky, or restless, your body's asking for alcohol. That's withdrawal, and it means your brain is already hooked.



## You keep saying "I can stop anytime" ... but don't.

If you've made promises to cut back or stop, but it never sticks, alcohol's already in control. Admitting that doesn't make you weak, it makes you smart enough to fight back.

## WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

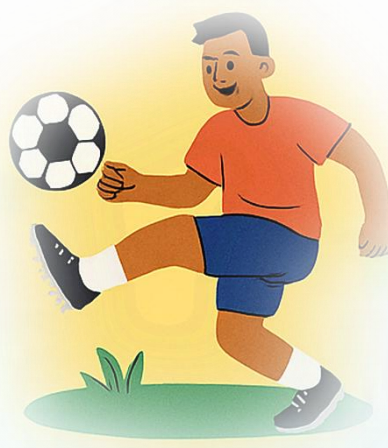
*Better Choices, real ways to get the rush without the risk.*

### Sports & Fitness

Move your body, clear your head, level up your discipline. Training releases feel-good chemicals (endorphins) that beat any fake buzz.

**How to start:** pick one: football, track, cricket, gym, boxing, dance, or swimming. Set a 4-week micro-goal (e.g., jogging 3 days/week).

**Why it works:** builds confidence, sleep improves, stress drops, and you gain a crew that pushes you forward.



### Music & Art

Create instead of escape. Write lyrics, learn guitar/keys, make beats, paint, film, or design. Turn feelings into something you can be proud of.

**How to start:** 20 minutes a day, one project at a time: learn three chords, one verse, one sketch.

**Why it works:** Expressing yourself is key! When you share your feelings instead of hiding them, you can stay focused and build your skills and experiences that will open new opportunities for you.



## Volunteering

Purpose hits harder than peer pressure. Help at community clean-ups, youth clubs, faith groups, shelters, or sports clinics.

**How to start:** choose a cause you care about and commit to two Saturdays a month.

**Why it works:** you meet solid people, build leadership skills, and feel needed, zero hangovers, maximum impact.



## Entrepreneurship

Turn ideas into income. Sell custom tees, hair & beauty services, snacks, digital flyers, photography, tutoring, whatever solves a real need.

**How to start:** Learn 3 cool skills, choose your favourite service, test it out with 5 paying customers, and use the money you make to grow even more!

**Why it works:** Money and independence sound great, right? Plus, you get to learn cool skills like budgeting, marketing, and managing your time, all while your friends might be wasting weekends. It's your chance to level up and be prepared for the future!



## Hanging with Sober Friends

Your circle is your future. Choose people who respect boundaries, dream big, and don't make you explain your "no."

**How to start:** plan chill, alcohol-free linkups, movie night, beach/creek day, games, football, night runs, study sessions.

**Why it works:** no pressure, no drama, memories you actually remember.

### Remember

Real confidence comes from being yourself, not from a bottle.

Anyone can drink. Leaders choose better.



## HELP & RESOURCES

You're never alone, and asking for help isn't weakness, it's strength. Recovery starts with one conversation, one message, one honest moment.

In Guyana and across the Caribbean, help is closer than you think.

### 1. Talk to someone you trust.

A teacher, relative, coach, or faith leader can help you find the right support. Talking breaks the silence that alcohol feeds on.

### 2. Visit your local health centre or hospital.

Doctors and counsellors can help you understand what's happening to your body and mind, safely and confidentially. The Ministry of Health and National Psychiatric Hospital (Fort Canje) provide assessment and treatment options for alcohol use.

### 3. Call or visit 1 of 10 drug treatment and care sites across Guyana,

The Ministry of Health supports people battling addiction and offers counselling for families affected by alcohol and drug use.

### 4. Reach out to faith- or community-based organisations.

Groups linked to churches, mosques, or community centres often offer safe spaces for talking, healing, and rebuilding.

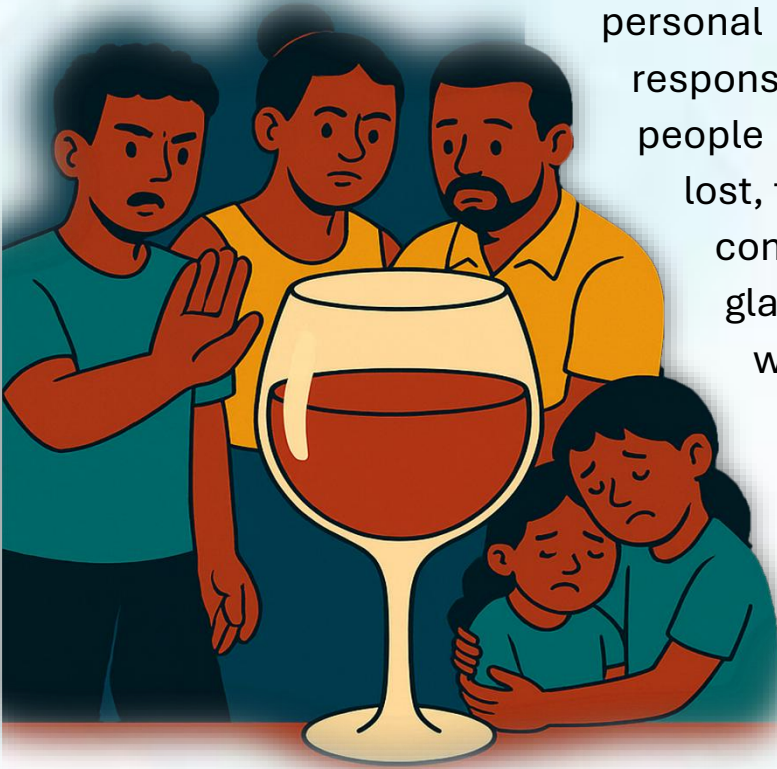
### 5. In emergencies, act fast.

If someone passes out, vomits repeatedly, or stops breathing after drinking, call for medical help immediately. Don't wait. Don't assume they'll "sleep it off." You could save a life.

**Remember:** Breaking free doesn't start with being strong, it starts with being honest. And once you take that first step, there's a whole network ready to walk the rest with you.

## A WARNING FOR EVERY READER

**Alcohol** is not a harmless part of culture, it is a slow, widespread epidemic disguised as entertainment. Reducing alcohol use is not just a matter of personal choice but a national responsibility. When fewer people drink, fewer lives are lost, families stay intact, and communities thrive. Each glass poured is a gamble with one's health, safety, and future. It's time to see alcohol for what it truly is a public health threat that we can, and must, confront together.



# THE BOTTOM LINE

**Saying no doesn't make you uptight or scared...it makes you aware.**

**When you know the traps, you don't fall for them.**

**And when you choose not to drink, you're not missing out... you're taking control of your story.**



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