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# Drugs & Alcohol Abroad

*Information for Volunteers*

## Notes

Disclaimer

In producing this booklet, Project Trust has made every effort to provide advice based on up to date evidence for what is effective. It is not intended as a substitute for thorough medical assessment and clinical intervention. If you are concerned about drug or alcohol misuse, please consult Project Trust or a professional for advice and support.

Acknowledgements

Information for this booklet was drawn from information collated and distributed by various Study Abroad Institutions and the Foreign Commonwealth Office.

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# Alcohol

**Project Trust recognises that drinking can be an enjoyable and harmless feature of life in the U.K. for an over 18 year old.**

**Volunteers who are over 18 are legally free to consume alcohol in the United Kingdom. Regulations surrounding alcohol consumption abroad can be different, however, and it is important that as a Volunteer, you make yourself aware of laws in your host country.**

In addition to promoting negative stereotypes in cultures overseas, there are serious health and safety risks that can result from excessive drinking. Alcohol abuse is often involved in accidents, sexual assaults, and violent crimes. In addition, driving under the influence and drinking in public may be considered criminal activities by authorities abroad and may carry greater penalties than they would in the United Kingdom. Project Trust believes it is important to make Volunteers aware of the potentially harmful effects of excessive drinking while on placement.

## Young Minds

Young Minds have a fantastic website with lots of information and advice.

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

## Mind

Offer advice and guidance in relation to mental health issues and how to support others.

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

## HealthLink 360

We have a partnership with Health Link 360 and they have supported our Volunteers overseas for a number of years. If you feel that you would benefit from professional support while you are on placement, please contact Project Trust and we will arrange for a staff member at Health Link 360 to contact you directly. You can visit their website for further information or chat to us about what services are available to you during your placement and on your return to the U.K.

[www.healthlink360.org](http://www.healthlink360.org)

## Project Trust

Do not hesitate to contact us if you need support or would like to chat with a staff member. You can reach us by emailing [info@projecttrust.org.uk](mailto:info@projecttrust.org.uk) or by calling the office on +44 (0) 1879 230 444.

## Further Help & Information

You can contact any of the organisations below for advice or support for yourself or a friend.

### Samaritans

Samaritans offer free and confidential help in the UK 24/7, you do not have to be suicidal to get in touch. While you are overseas, you can email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

### Addaction

Addaction supports adults, children, young adults and older people to make positive behavioural changes, whether that's with alcohol, drugs, or mental health and wellbeing.

[www.addaction.org.uk](http://www.addaction.org.uk)

### Talk to Frank

FRANK has a wealth of information on drugs and their effects. It provides friendly, confidential drug advice online.

[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)

### The Mix

The Mix offers free and confidential support to under 25s. Email and web chat support are available on their website.

[www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

## Recommended Levels of Alcohol Consumption

**The over-consumption of alcohol can damage health, both in the short term and long term, and all Volunteers should be aware of the medically recommended maximum levels of consumption.**

**The NHS recommends that: -**

- Men should not regularly drink more than 3-4 units of alcohol a day.
- Women should not regularly drink more than 2-3 units a day.

Women and men are not affected equally by alcohol. In general, women will be more affected by the alcohol they consume than a man of the same size and weight. Women typically have a higher percentage of body fat than men and will absorb more of the alcohol they consume. Women also tend to have less of an enzyme which helps to break down alcohol in the stomach. As a result, women can absorb almost a third more alcohol than men when they drink.

If you've had a heavy drinking session, avoid alcohol for 48 hours. ('Regularly' means drinking this amount every day or most days of the week.)

For more information, we encourage you to visit [drinkaware.co.uk](http://drinkaware.co.uk)

## Risks of Alcohol

**Alcohol consumption can result in anti-social and inhibited behaviour, leading to embarrassment, regret and physical injury to yourself and others. Heavy drinking can also impair your ability to carry out your Volunteer role abroad. Putting yourself and your ability to carry out your role abroad at risk will result in repatriation.**

Alcohol use can also result in a number of sexual consequences, including unprotected sex; sexual assault; greater exposure to HIV/AIDS and STD's; and pregnancy. Most sexual assaults involve the use of alcohol on the part of the perpetrator or the victim. Alcohol misuse can result in impaired judgment, which can put you at risk of either committing a sexual assault or becoming the victim of a sexual assault.

Both male and female Volunteers should be aware of the danger of "date-rape drugs" or "drink spiking" (even of soft drinks). Drinks should not be left unattended; if there is even the slightest suspicion that a drink has been tampered with, it should not be drunk.

Rohypnol (also called "roofies" or the "date rape" drug) and GHB are two drugs that are often implicated in sexual assaults.

## Advice & Support

**Excessive drinking or taking drugs can be a sign that a Volunteer is suffering from stress, depression or anxiety and needs help.**

Volunteers can seek support from a variety of sources. If you need advice, please approach a member of Project Trust staff. All information will be treated with the strictest confidence.

Drug charges can carry severe consequences, including imprisonment without bail for up to a year before a case is tried, and sentences ranging from fines and time in prison to the death penalty.

Information regarding drug penalties in your host country can be found on the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office website: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice> If you find yourself in a legal situation, contact the closest U.K. embassy or consulate for assistance and Project Trust. However, consider that U.K. consular employees cannot arrange for your release. Once you leave the United Kingdom, you are not covered by U.K. laws and constitutional rights. You are operating under the laws of the host country and the regulations of the local institution. Neither the U.K. government nor Project Trust will be able to secure your release should you be arrested

These drugs are sometimes used recreationally but are often given to a person without their knowledge or consent. They are odourless and tasteless (GHB can leave a slightly salty taste in a drink) and can be easily dissolved in a drink. When either of these drugs is administered, you can suffer from dis-inhibition, loss of consciousness, and the inability to remember events that took place while under the influence.

## How to avoid being drugged:

- Do not accept beverages, including non-alcoholic ones, from someone not known and well trusted.
- In a bar, only accept drinks from the bartender or waiting staff.
- Always watch your drink at bars and parties. Never leave your drink unattended. Be aware of what's going on around you.
- Be alert to the behaviour of friends. If someone appears much more drunk than they should be, considering the amount of alcohol consumed, be concerned and closely monitor the person's behaviour.
- If you feel dizzy, disoriented or physically uncomfortable in any way, tell someone you trust and ask for help in getting home.

## Health Risks

**Alcohol, when used in excess, can cause alcohol poisoning. The effects of alcohol poisoning can range from vomiting to falling into a coma and subsequent death. Too much alcohol can cause vital organs, such as the heart and lungs, to slow down and even stop.**

Very often when someone dies from alcohol poisoning, it is because they pass out and are allowed to “sleep it off.” This is a mistake. Anyone who drinks so much that they become unconscious or exhibit any of the signs below should receive immediate attention.

### **Warning signs of alcohol poisoning include:**

- Cold, clammy, pale, or bluish skin
- Slow rate of respiration (eight breaths per minute or less)
- Irregular rate of respiration (10 seconds or more between breaths)
- Vomiting while “sleeping” or passed out without waking up
- Disoriented to time and place (doesn’t know where they are)
- Unconsciousness and inability to be awakened

It takes the liver about an hour to metabolize the amount of alcohol contained in a standard drink (1.5 ounces of alcohol). Drinking coffee or taking a cold shower will not speed up the process. Only time can make a person sober.

## Drug Use Overseas

**The possession and use of illegal drugs during your time abroad will result in immediate repatriation from your host country. Please be aware that using illegal drugs in your host country will be dealt with under the law of that country. Penalties for drug use or possession abroad can be extremely severe.**

When travelling abroad, it’s important to obey the laws and regulations of the country you’re visiting, especially those pertaining to drug and alcohol use. British people have been arrested abroad on drug charges for possession of an ounce or less of marijuana. Contraband or paraphernalia associated with illegal drug use can also result in penalties.

Some British people have been caught with illegal drugs or substances as a result of agreeing to carry a small package in their luggage in exchange for money or a free vacation.

### **DO NOT CARRY PACKAGES FOR ANYONE.**

If the package contains illegal drugs or substances, the fact that you didn’t know will not reduce the charges.