

HOW DO YOU LOOK AFTER A DRUNK FRIEND?

There are a number of simple messages that all young people, whether they are drinkers or non-drinkers, should know when it comes to looking after their friends who have had too much to drink.

Here are some simple tips on how to look after a drunk friend:

- Stick with them and never leave them alone
- Monitor them
- Reassure them
- Keep them comfortable
- Keep them hydrated
- If in doubt, call for help

Stick with them and never leave them alone

Being alone when you are unwell, particularly if you have been drinking, is incredibly dangerous. Letting a friend go to the toilet to be sick is a potentially life-threatening situation. If the person passes out and they've locked the door, how is help going to get in? Never, ever let someone go to the toilet, or anywhere else for that matter, to be sick.

Monitor them

The line between being drunk and being poisoned can be fine. If a person is already unwell and has drunk alcohol in the past hour or so, there is every likelihood that they could become worse as that alcohol is yet to be absorbed and hit the brain. It is essential that someone stays with a person who is feeling unwell after drinking alcohol and makes sure they stay there until they are feeling better.

Reassure them

When you are unwell after drinking it can be very frightening. Adding to the discomfort for young people is the fear that their parents may discover what they have been up to or that the police may become involved. Friends being close, reassuring them that everything will be okay is important.

Keep them comfortable

If they are feeling sick there is every likelihood that they may be feverish. Their temperature may rise and often they will want to take off surplus clothing and footwear. Putting a cold compress (or even a cold water bottle) on the back of the person's neck can make them feel much more comfortable. Make sure that there is also something warm to wrap around them just in case they start to get cold – this is particularly true in situations where young people gather in parks or country areas to drink.

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Keep them hydrated

Hydration is a difficult one. If they are not being sick, make sure that the person replaces lost fluids, i.e., if they have been urinating a lot, they need to drink water. It is also important to make sure that someone is hydrated if they are vomiting, but if you give them water to drink during that time, it is highly likely that they will simply vomit it back up relatively quickly. Soak a t-shirt or cloth in cold water and then have the person vomiting suck on that in between being sick. That way, they are rehydrating and also making their mouth feel a little more pleasant, but not gulping down water that is likely to make them vomit more.

If in doubt, don't hesitate to call for medical assistance

It's hard to be too specific as to what constitutes a 'medical emergency' but it is imperative that young people are aware that they won't get into trouble for calling an ambulance. Even if the ambulance arrives and the situation has resolved itself – it's better to be safe than sorry.

They also need to know that the police will not attend a medical emergency involving alcohol or other drugs, unless another crime such as violence, has taken place.