

Alcohol and other substances policy

The use of alcohol and other substances in the workplace can have significant adverse effects on the health and safety of yourself, your colleagues and our patients.

Introduction

Under the Health & Safety at Work Act 2015 and its associated regulations, Southern Cross Healthcare has a legal duty to ensure the safety of all our people. This legal duty requires the employer to take all reasonably practicable steps to provide and maintain a safe work environment. The Act and associated regulations require the employer to manage potential impairment hazards especially in safety-sensitive areas, roles and tasks.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy alcohol and other substances means:

- any substance that contains alcohol (ethanol) including but not limited to beer, wine, pre-mix drinks and other spirits; and
- any substance, medication or chemical which is illicit or otherwise has the potential to cause impairment, including but not limited to:
 - cannabis and hashish;
 - Non-prescription opiates (such as heroin and morphine) cocaine;
 - amphetamine type substances (speed, "P", ecstasy and party pills containing benzylpiperazine);
 - synthetic THC, cathinone derivatives.
- The term also includes the misuse of some prescription drugs such as tranquillisers, sedatives and other currently legal party pills and herbal highs. Any other psychoactive substances may also be included for the purposes of this policy.

This policy applies to all employees, contractors and credentialed medical specialists who perform work in or for Southern Cross Healthcare.

Policy

You must report to work in such a condition that you are able to perform your duties and activities properly and safely. Under no circumstances must you come to work under the influence of alcohol or other substances, except for medications prescribed for you by an authorised medical practitioner. Hospitals considers breaches of this policy as serious misconduct.

No alcohol or non-prescribed medications are to be brought onto the premises of Southern Cross Healthcare except for:

- a small amount of general sale medications for personal use where necessary; and
- Infrequent occasions where Hospitals host an approved and authorised 'staff drinks' where alcohol may be provided. Even in these situations, under no circumstances must you become intoxicated. At these events, you must ensure that you only consume alcohol in a sensible, conscientious and reasonable manner.

If you are prescribed medication, you are expected to ask your prescribing doctor if the medication will have any actual or potential negative effects on the performance of your role and or to the health and safety of yourself or others. If so, you are required to report this to your direct supervisor or manager before commencing your work. You may also be asked to provide proof of the potential impact, or proof that there will not be an impact.

Southern Cross Healthcare may suspect you of being under the influence of alcohol or other substances while at work when:

- you are involved in a violent incident with another individual;

- you are involved in an accident or near miss which has the potential to cause serious harm or damage to Hospitals' property, or does cause serious harm or damage to Hospitals' property;
- you are seen to be in possession of drug or alcohol related substances or paraphernalia at work;
- you are seen to be using drug or alcohol related substances or paraphernalia while at work; or
- you are behaving or presenting in a way consistent with the symptoms and effects of alcohol or drug use, for example:
 - slurred speech;
 - strong smell of alcohol or cannabis emanating from your person;
 - bloodshot eyes or overly dilated/constricted pupils;
 - difficulty with concentrating;
 - erratic, aggressive, lethargic or other unusual behaviour; or
 - poor physical co-ordination.

Procedure

If Hospitals has a reasonable cause to suspect you of being under the influence of alcohol or other substances, you may be directed to leave the work environment and if you are an employee, undertake a drug and/or alcohol test. Where the legislative requirements¹ are met, notification to the relevant regulatory authority will be undertaken for further management.

Should you be directed to undertake a drug and/or alcohol test this will be a urinary test for drugs and a breath test for alcohol, and a suitably trained agency will conduct the testing using approved methods and will be conducted onsite at the earliest possible time. This should be within 1 hour for alcohol tests and 2-3 hours for drug tests.

Should your results indicate that you are under any influence of any of the substances outlined above or you return a non-negative result, if you are an employee you may be suspended on full pay until you are fit for work, or further confirmatory testing can be undertaken. If the testing confirms that you were under the influence of these substances in the work place, you may also face disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Southern Cross Healthcare may also view any refusal to undertake drug and alcohol testing as serious misconduct, which may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Upon your return to work following a positive drug test, you will be required to undertake a recheck so that Hospitals can ensure that you are now fit for work. Should your recheck result indicate that you are still under the influence of alcohol or other substances, you will be placed on an additional period of suspension and may face further disciplinary action.

If you are worried about your alcohol or drug use, you are welcome to contact EAP Works to discuss the issue confidentially.

Note: Nothing in this procedure or policy will affect any of your rights under the Privacy Act 1993.

Resources

Health and Safety at Work Act 2015

¹Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2001

The Privacy Act 1993

Human Rights Act 1993

Employment NZ: <https://www.employment.govt.nz/workplace-policies/tests-and-checks/drugs-alcohol-and-work/>

Nursing Council of New Zealand <http://www.nursingcouncil.org.nz/Nurses/Fitness-to-practise>

Peterman JF, Desbiens NA. Should physicians be allowed to use alcohol while on call? *Journal of Medical Ethics* 2005;**31**:21-26.

Medical Council of New Zealand: Health concerns about a doctor; <https://www.mcnz.org.nz/our-standards/fitness-to-practise/health-concerns-about-a-doctor/>

CONTENT CONTROL

Published Date: **14 Oct 2019**

Version: **6**

Site: **Network**

Content Owner: **Jo Fair**

Authorised By: **Chief of People and
Culture**



**WATCH THIS
CONTENT**