

Family First Aid

Tips for families coping with problematic substance use

When problematic substance use becomes a family issue, simple and immediate strategies can be effective. Think of it as First Aid for the Family. It is not a cure, but a means to:

- Manage the crisis
- Prevent the immediate situation from getting worse
- Promote healing and provide comfort and support for family members



A Family First Aid kit holds the basic tools to provide that initial help. It is helpful if all family members know what is in the kit; who is responsible for the keeping the kit up-to-date; and that all family members agree on how and when to use it.

Below is a guide on using your Family First Aid Kit.

The Family Band-Aid

Used for situations not serious enough to require crisis intervention. The family band-aid protects the family from friction; and is useful for minor 'cuts and grazes'.

- ✓ Take a deep breath and a little time out
- ✓ Attend an EDAS First Response Forum

The Family Antiseptic

Used to prevent the substance use issue from infecting the whole family. Family Antiseptics while effective, have the capacity to sting, albeit for a very short moment. Do something practical such as:

- ✓ Practicing a boundary
- ✓ Don't talk to the intoxicated person right now; check they are safe and then walk away

The Family Dressing or Splint

A dressing is applied directly to the issue to promote healing and the splint immobilises the family for extra support.

- ✓ Set the family rules
- ✓ Make the boundaries clear and straight

The Family Sling

Used to support a fractured or sprained relationship to help secure family members and prevent further damage to the family.

- ✓ Phone or see a friend
- ✓ Ring the Family Drug Helpline: 1300 600 068
- ✓ Attend an EDAS Peer Support Group meeting

The Family Hot/Cold Compress

Used to promote further healing, ease discomfort and provide temporary relief from family 'aches and pains'.

- ✓ Sit with a 3rd party like Family Mediation where you can problem-solve in a safe, contained environment
- ✓ EDAS Family Counselling can help to support your goals and strategies

The Family Medication

Used to soothe frazzled nerves and decrease feelings of anxiety or panic. It's about self-care.

- ✓ Go for a walk or have a calming cup of tea
- ✓ Talk to your supports

If symptoms persist, make a referral to the Eastern Drug and Alcohol Service

EDAS provides free, confidential counselling to adults, young people and families and who live, work or study in the Eastern Metropolitan Region. Phone our duty worker on the number below to make a referral, or to arrange to speak with an EDAS Family Counsellor in your area for more information or assistance.

1300 650 705