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# Coronavirus blamed for booze addiction spike on northern beaches

The number of people seeking treatment for alcohol dependency at Northern Beaches Hospital jumped during the coronavirus lockdown – and many of them were first timers.

Julie Cross, Manly Daily

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Northern Beaches Hospital at Frenchs Forest.

The number of people seeking help for alcohol abuse spiked during the second half of the lockdown, according to a Northern Beaches Hospital addictions specialist.

Dr Mark Hardy said the mental health unit at the Frenchs Forest hospital saw a sharp increase in people seeking help for alcohol-related abuse when “lockdown got to them” after about four weeks.

The unit saw 140 admissions in May up 20 per cent on the average month.

“We have seen a whole group of new people that have not presented before who have popped up,” Dr Hardy said.

“Some of them have lost jobs or just found lockdown restrictions too much and struggled with interpersonal issues.



Dr Mark Hardy, addictions specialist at Northern Beaches Hospital. Picture: Supplied.

“Others have felt they’ve lost their identity.”


He said he has also seen some with a previous history of addiction relapsing because of anxiety triggered by the pandemic.

“Alcohol abuse is the number one issue here on the beaches and people are drinking early in the day and despite pubs being closed they are accessing takeaway alcohol at home,” Dr Hardy said.

He said for some a regular routine and spending time out of the home in a workplace where others are watching is enough to keep alcohol abuse at bay.

He said alcohol addiction probably counted for about 60 to 70 per cent of the people who saw on the northern beaches, with prescription and pharmaceutical drugs along with cannabis, also a problem.



 The number of people seeking help for alcohol spiked in the second half of lockdown.

Dr Hardy, who works in the private mental health unit at Northern Beaches Hospital, also added he was pleased to see that some who had addictions pre-COVID-19 have actually taken the opportunity to work on their issues during lockdown.

He said while he understood that some people felt concerned about coming to a hospital for any sort of treatment at the moment for fear of catching the coronavirus, there are no COVID-19 patients at the moment and there is negligible to zero chance of catching it onsite.

He said it was essential that people seek help for any mental health problem or dependency as quickly as possible.

He said 90 per cent of Australian adults drink and around five to 10 per cent develop a problem sometime during their lives.

Patients can access the mental health unit through the emergency department or via a referral from their GP.