



Alcohol use increases the risk of cancer

Current evidence

There is convincing evidence that any level of alcohol consumption increases the risk of developing an alcohol-related cancer such as cancers of the mouth, throat (pharynx and larynx), oesophagus, bowel (in men) and breast (in women). The level of risk increases in line with the level of consumption, meaning the more you drink, the greater the risk. Even drinking small amounts of alcohol increases your risk.

To reduce cancer risk, Cancer Council Queensland recommends that people limit their consumption of alcohol, or better still avoid alcohol altogether. For individuals who choose to drink alcohol, Cancer Council recommends that they drink only within the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) *Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol* <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ds10>

NHMRC alcohol guidelines

For healthy men and women, drinking no more than two standard drinks on any day reduces the lifetime risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury. For a copy of the NHMRC alcohol guidelines go to www.nhmrc.gov.au/

What is a standard drink?

The Australian measure of a standard drink contains 10 grams of alcohol (equivalent to 12.5 mL of pure alcohol). By law, all bottles, cans and casks containing alcohol must state on the label the number of standard drinks that they contain.

One standard drink equals:

- 100 mL wine (1 bottle = 7 standard drinks)
- 285 mL (1 pot) of full strength beer
- 375 mL (can/stubbie) of mid strength beer
- 425 mL (1 schooner) of low alcohol beer
- 30 mL (1 nip) of spirits
- 60 mL (2 nips) of sherry
- Cocktails may contain more than three standard drinks!

Each of these represents one standard drink



100mL small
serve of wine
12% Alc./Vol.



285mL middy/
pot* full
strength beer
4.9% Alc./Vol.



30mL
spirit nip
40% Alc./Vol.

*NSW, WA, ACT- Middy; VIC, QLD, TAS - Pot;
NT - Handle/Pot; SA - Schooner.

Tips to reduce alcohol consumption:

- Avoid or limit alcohol
- Choose drinks with a low or no alcohol content
- Dilute alcoholic drinks, for example a wine spritzer (wine and soda water) or a shandy (beer and lemonade)

Alcohol and cancer risk

- Alternate alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic drinks
- Use water to quench your thirst and sip alcoholic drinks slowly
- Eat some food, preferably low in salt, while you drink alcohol
- Set yourself limits and stick to them
- Offer to be the designated driver.

Smoking and alcohol

The combined effect of smoking and drinking alcohol greatly increases cancer risk, especially cancers of the upper digestive tract (mouth, throat, oesophagus and stomach).

Alcohol and body weight

Alcoholic drinks represent 'empty kilojoules' – that is, alcoholic drinks are high in kilojoules but low in nutritional value, especially when added to sugary mixer drinks. If people drink alcohol, even at low levels, they are liable to gain weight. Being overweight or obese increases your cancer risk. There is convincing evidence that body fatness increases the risk of cancers of the oesophagus, pancreas, bowel, endometrium, kidney and breast (in post-menopausal women).

Action plan to reduce your cancer risk:

- Don't smoke
- Be SunSmart
- Be physically active
- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Eat a healthy diet
- Avoid or limit alcohol
- Check your body for any unusual changes.

For further information and advice:

- **Cancer Council Queensland Helpline 13 11 20**
Monday to Friday, 8am - 6pm
- Cancer Council Queensland website
www.cancerqld.org.au
- National Health and Medical Research Council.
Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol.
www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ds10

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Cancer Council Queensland, www.cancerqld.org.au

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