



# Alcohol and Cancer Prevention

**There is convincing evidence that drinking alcohol increases the risk of cancers of the bowel, breast, mouth, throat, voice box, oesophagus (food pipe) and liver.**

## Alcohol and cancer risk

Drinking alcohol increases your cancer risk.

The type of alcohol you drink doesn't make any difference – beer, wine and spirits all increase your risk of cancer. The amount of alcohol is measured in standard drinks.

Alcohol generally contains a lot of kilojoules or calories, so it can contribute to weight gain. Being overweight or obese increases your cancer risk.

The more you drink, the greater the overall risk. Consider the risks and benefits of drinking alcohol and make a personal decision about drinking. If you choose to drink, limit your intake.

## Other health problems and alcohol

Heavy use of alcohol is linked to many other health problems, such as cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver, alcohol dependence, stroke, suicide and injury.

In the past, researchers believed red wine might have had health benefits for heart disease, but this does not appear to be the case.

There are better things you can do to reduce your risk of heart disease and cancer, such as not smoking, eating a nutritious diet, being physically active and maintaining a healthy body weight.

## Smoking and alcohol

It has been known for a long time that smoking is harmful to health. However, the combined effect of smoking and alcohol greatly increases the risk of cancer (more so than from either factor alone).

Up to 75 per cent of cancers of the upper airway and digestive tract are related to alcohol plus smoking.

## How can I reduce my cancer risk?

If you don't drink, don't start. If you choose to drink:

- Limit your intake – The National Health and Medical Research Council recommends no more than two standard drinks on any day.
- Avoid binge drinking. Do not “save” your drinks by having alcohol-free days, only to consume them all in one session.
- Have at least two alcohol-free days every week.
- Choose low alcohol drinks.
- Eat some food when you drink.

If you have any concerns or questions about alcohol, please contact your doctor.

## Measuring standard drinks

**One standard drink = 10g of pure alcohol**

- 100ml wine (750ml bottle = 7.7 standard drinks)
- 285ml (middy) of full strength beer (4.9% alcohol) = 1.1 standard drinks
- 425 ml (schooner) of low alcohol beer (2.7% alcohol) = 0.9 standard drink
- 30ml (nip) of spirits (40% alcohol) = 1 standard drink
- 375ml pre-mix spirits (5% alcohol) = 1.5 standard drinks
- Cocktails may contain 3 or more standard drinks!

## Where can I get reliable information?

- **Cancer Council NSW 13 11 20.** Information and support for you and your family for the cost of a local call anywhere in Australia.  
[www.cancercouncil.com.au](http://www.cancercouncil.com.au)
- **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)**  
13 14 50