

Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health: Final Report

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by the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction

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SUMMARY

This report includes detailed information with respect to drinking alcohol and cancer risk and features a risk continuum based on daily alcohol intake. The report is a science-based update of the current knowledge and recommendations on alcohol and health and replaces the 2011 *Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines*.

To reduce the risk of harm from alcohol, the report recommends that individuals consider reducing their alcohol use noting levels of risk:

- A maximum of 2 standard drinks per week is associated with the **lowest risk**
- Between 3 and 6 drinks is associated with **moderate risk**, and
- 7 or more drinks is associated with **increasingly high risk**

Importantly, each additional standard drink per week dramatically increases the risk of alcohol-related health consequences.

Many Canadians don't know what a "standard drink" is. It's:

- 12 oz of beer/cider (5% alcohol)
- 5 oz of wine (12%), or
- 1.5 oz of spirits (40%)

The report concludes that drinking less is better for one's health. Less alcohol consumption leads to a lower risk of cancer (especially breast, colon, rectal, oral, esophageal, larynx, and liver malignancies), as well as heart disease, liver disease and violence.

- About 7,000 cancer-related deaths each year are associated with alcohol in Canada, out of a total of 84,000 cancer deaths total.

The approach of the report is that Canadians have a right to know the risks. The aim of the report is to provide guidance that should help people make well-informed and responsible decisions about their alcohol consumption.

CCMB's messaging has been and will continue to be to ***Avoid Alcohol*** as one of the ways of reducing cancer risk. Our prevention messaging has been in keeping with current research results supporting fewer drinks than recommended in the 2011 Canadian guidelines. We are updating our Cancer Prevention guidance on our website to be in line with *Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health*, and continuing our recommendation to "Avoid Alcohol" – and the fact that 2 or fewer alcoholic drinks per week reduces your cancer risk.

Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health: Final Report (ccsa.ca) (https://ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2023-01/Canada%27s%20Guidance%20on%20Alcohol%20and%20Health%20Final%20Report_I.pdf)