



CANCER

Drinking Alcohol

Alcohol is common, but its harms can be far-reaching

Many people don't know that drinking alcohol causes cancer. For those who also smoke, the cancer risk is even greater. Smokers who drink alcohol—particularly heavy smokers and heavy drinkers—are at a much higher risk for cancers of the mouth, throat and esophagus.

Alcohol has been known to be a community or family problem and can lead to violence, abuse, accidents, self-inflicted injury and death.

When pregnant women drink alcohol, children risk developing fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), which can delay growth and/or cause nervous system problems and abnormal facial features.

Drinking less decreases cancer risk

Not drinking at all is the best choice for health. Men who drink should limit their alcohol intake to 2 drinks per day, and women should have no more than 1 drink per day.

What is "a drink?" One serving of alcohol is a 12 ounce beer or ale, a 5 ounce glass of wine or a 1.5 ounce (1 standard bar shot) of liquor, such as rum, rye or gin.





Drinking Alcohol

Drinking too much

Evidence suggests that with each additional drink consumed per day, a person's risk for developing cancer increases (in particular for oral and pharyngeal cancers and breast cancer).

Those who smoke and drink are at particularly high risk of developing cancer.

For First Nation and non-Aboriginal adults, men were significantly more likely than women to have had five or more drinks on one occasion at least two to three times a month in the past year. Also, significantly more First Nation women living on-reserve and off-reserve were binge drinkers than non-Aboriginal females.

Drinking less

Not everyone who drinks is an alcoholic or addicted. However, drinking less is certainly better for overall health.

Sometimes people just start to limit the amount of alcohol they drink without much thought. For example, many people drink less as they get older.

Even though there are high rates of binge drinking, First Nation adults living on-reserve are more likely to abstain from drinking alcohol.

Others need support to make that change. Some successful approaches to drinking less include:

- Learning how alcohol affects you
- Analyzing your drinking behaviour and trigger situations
- Understanding the reasons you drink and the way drinking feels
- Learning new ways to solve problems and cope

All of these actions can positively lead to improved self-esteem, better relationships and the ability to distance yourself from drinking.