



**Cancer
Council**
SA

Drink less alcohol.

Alcohol causes
seven types
of cancer

Information and support

13 11 20

cancersa.org.au

Cut your cancer risk

There is no way to guarantee that you won't get cancer. However, at least one in three cancers can be prevented by living a healthy lifestyle.

Cancer Council recommends you:



be smoke-free, and avoid second-hand smoke



Maintain a healthy weight and aim for a waist circumference no greater than 94 cm for men, and 80 cm for women



protect your skin in five ways (slip, slop, slap, seek and slide) when the ultraviolet (UV) radiation level is 3 and above



eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables daily



limit processed meats, such as bacon and salami, and have no more than 455g of cooked red meat (700g raw weight) each week



eat a variety of wholegrain or wholemeal breads and cereals



limit foods high in salt, saturated fat and sugar



get 30 mins of vigorous or 60 mins of moderate intensity activity on most days of the week



limit alcohol to no more than ten standard drinks per week, and no more than four standard drinks on any one day



get to know your body and what is normal for you. See your GP if you notice any changes



have regular, appropriate cancer screening tests

Q: Does drinking alcohol increase cancer risk?

Drinking alcohol is a risk factor for seven types of cancer, including:

- breast
- bowel
- cancer of the mouth and throat (pharynx and larynx)
- oesophagus
- stomach
- liver.

The risk of some cancer types is even higher for people who drink and smoke.

About 3,500 cases of cancer diagnosed each year in Australian adults can be attributed to drinking alcohol.

Alcohol contains a lot of energy (kilojoules or calories) so it can contribute to weight gain. Being overweight or obese is a risk factor for 13 different types of cancer including bowel, breast (after menopause), endometrium, kidney, pancreas, liver and oesophagus.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in Australian women. While you cannot change some of the risk factors for breast cancer, drinking less alcohol and maintaining a healthy weight are changes you can make to reduce your risk.

Q: How does alcohol increase cancer risk?

Researchers are still investigating how alcohol causes cancer. However, there are several possible reasons:

- Alcoholic drinks contain ethanol, which irritates cells in the body, particularly the mouth and throat. Over a long period, even with moderate drinking, this cell irritation can lead to cancer.
- Alcohol causes cirrhosis of the liver, which is a risk factor for liver cancer.
- Alcohol increases oestrogen levels, which is linked to breast cancer.
- When alcohol is digested it breaks down into compounds that can cause cancer.

Q: Is it true alcohol is good for my heart?

The Heart Foundation does not recommend alcohol consumption for the treatment or prevention of heart disease. There are many positive things that you can do to reduce your risk of heart disease, such as eating well, exercising regularly and not smoking. These measures can also reduce your risk of cancer.

Q: How much can I drink?

To reduce your risk of cancer, limit your intake of alcohol or - better still - avoid it altogether. The less you drink, the lower your risk.

If you choose to drink alcohol, follow the National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines and have no more than ten standard drinks per week, and no more than four standard drinks on any one day.

ONE STANDARD DRINK contains 10 grams of alcohol and is equal to:

- 100 mL of wine (approx. 2/3 of a typical restaurant pour)
- 30 mL (one nip) of spirits
- 60 mL (two nips) of sherry
- 425 mL (one South Australian 'pint') of light beer
- 285 mL (South Australian 'schooner') of full-strength/regular beer or cider
- 220–250 mL ready-to-drink alcoholic sodas (around 2/3 bottle)

Some cocktails contain more than three standard drinks.

Drinks served at home and at restaurants and bars usually contain more than one standard drink.

Standard drinks guide



1.0
425 ml (one South Australian 'pint') of light beer



1.0
285 ml (One South Australian 'schooner') of full-strength/regular beer or cider



1.0
220–250 ml alcopop/alcoholic soda ($\frac{2}{3}$ bottle)



1.0
100 ml wine (approx. $\frac{2}{3}$ of a typical restaurant pour)



1.0
60 ml (2 nips) of sherry



1.0
30 ml (1 nip) of spirits

HOW TO CUT DOWN ON ALCOHOL



- Choose a non-alcoholic drink such as sparkling mineral water with fresh lemon or lime slices.
- Use water to quench thirst.
- Sip alcoholic drinks slowly.
- Alternate alcoholic drinks with a glass of water.
- Set yourself a limit and stop once you've reached it.
- Wait until your glass is empty before topping it up to keep count of your drinks.
- Switch to low alcohol drinks, dilute spirits with extra mixer and ice, or have a spritzer or shandy (wine or beer mixed with soda or mineral water).
- Have some alcohol-free days each week.
- Eat while you drink to slow your drinking pace.
- Avoid salty snacks that make you thirsty.
- Catch up with friends for a coffee rather than an alcoholic drink.
- Meet friends to play cricket, tennis or go bushwalking rather than going to clubs and pubs.



Drinking alcohol, even small amounts, increases the risk of cancer, and the risk increases with every drink you have. The type of alcohol you drink – wine, beer or spirits – doesn't make any difference to cancer risk.



For free* and confidential information and support about cancer, Monday to Friday 8.30 am – 5.30 pm:

- call Cancer Council **13 11 20**
- chat online at **cancersa.org.au**
- email **askanurse@cancersa.org.au**

Free* interpreting service is available on **13 14 50**

*Cost of a local call