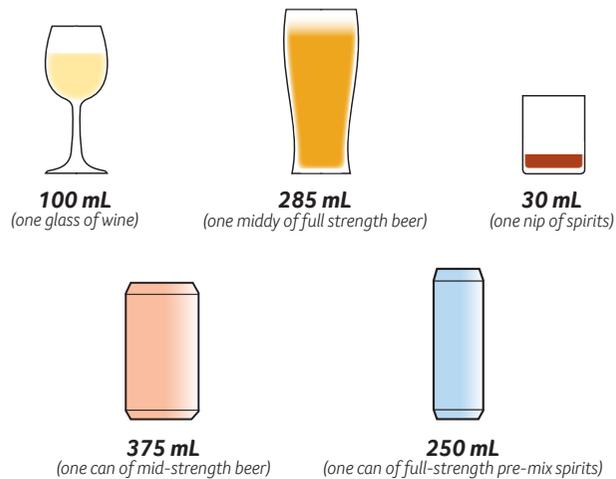


## What is a standard drink?

A standard drink contains 10 grams of alcohol (ethanol). All bottles, cans and casks of alcohol sold in Australia are required to state on the label the number of standard drinks they contain. You can use this information to estimate how much alcohol you are drinking.

Different types of alcoholic drinks contain different amounts of alcohol.

One standard alcoholic drink is equal to:



Some things make it difficult to keep track of how many standard drinks you actually have. Glass sizes vary, people share drinks, glasses may be topped up by other people, or you may not know how much alcohol is in the drink you are having (for example mixed drinks such as cocktails or punch). Pouring your own drinks and avoiding 'rounds' make it easier to keep track of how much you drink.

## Tips for drinking less

To reduce the risk of cancer, we recommend that people avoid drinking alcohol. But if you choose to drink, we support drinking only within the NHMRC guidelines for alcohol consumption.

Here are some tips for drinking within safe limits:

- Keep count of the number of drinks you have – set yourself a limit and stick to it
- Have drinks with a lower alcohol content like mid-strength beer
- Aim to have at least two alcohol-free days a week
- Alternate alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic drinks like sparkling water
- Drink slowly and put down your glass between sips
- Eat before or while drinking alcohol
- Avoid rounds – drink at your own pace, not someone else's.

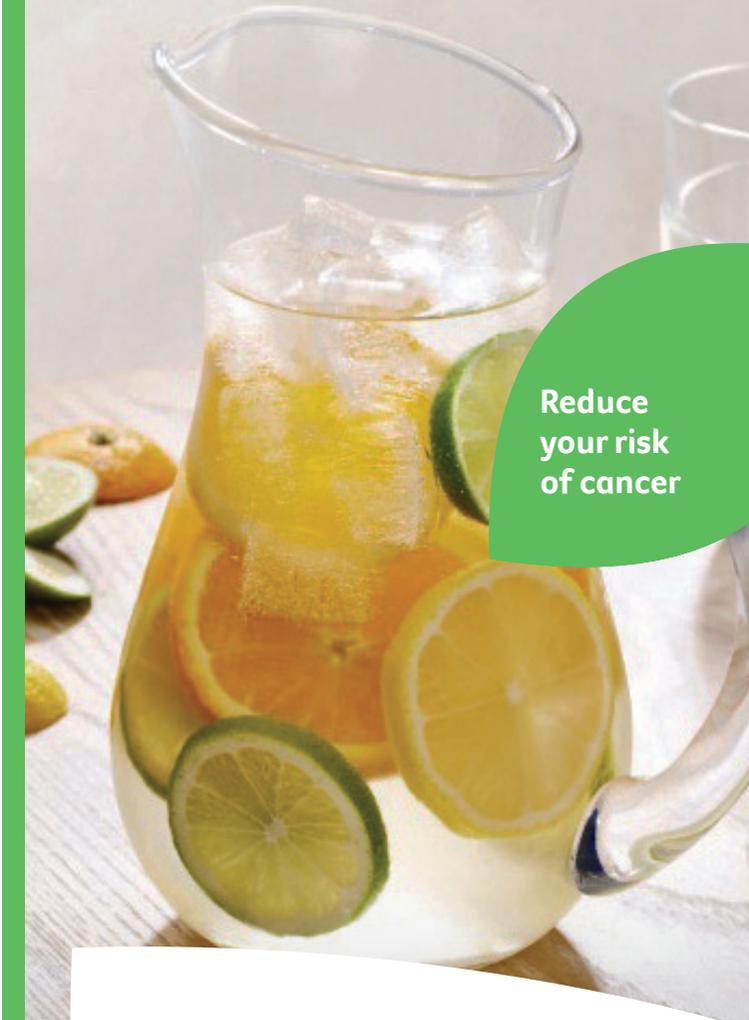


Images adapted with permission from LiveLighter. LiveLighter® State of Western Australia 2019; livelighter.com.au



For support and information on cancer and cancer-related issues, speak to a Cancer Council Nurse on **13 11 20**. Calls are confidential and available statewide Monday to Friday during business hours.

# Alcohol and cancer.



Reduce your risk of cancer

**13 11 20**  
Cancer Council

 **Cancer Council**  
WA

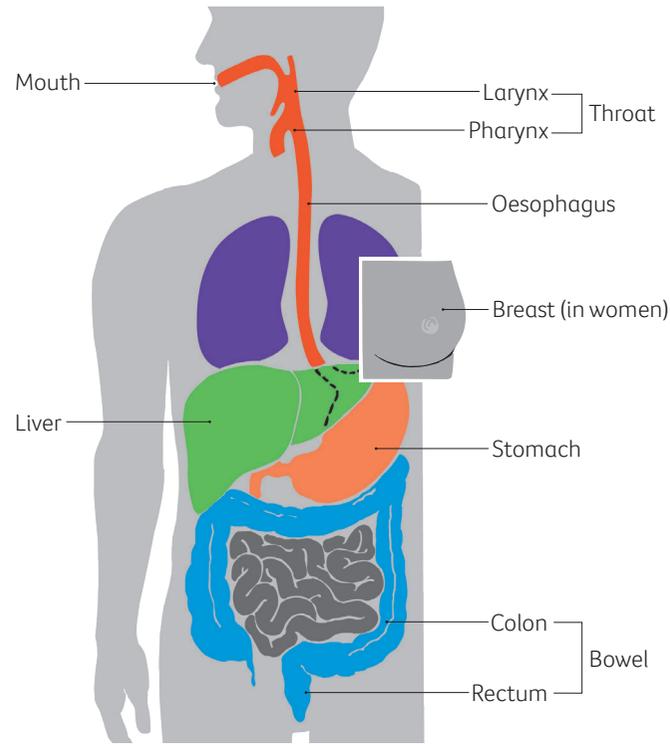
## Drinking alcohol increases your risk of cancer

Drinking alcohol is a cause of cancer. It's not just heavy drinking that increases cancer risk. Even drinking small amounts can be harmful. The more you drink and the more often you drink, the greater your risk.

The world-leading cancer agency - the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) - has classified alcoholic drinks and the chemical present in these drinks (ethanol) as a Group 1 carcinogen, which means there is no doubt that it causes cancer.

There is now convincing evidence that alcohol leads to cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx (voice box), oesophagus (gullet), liver, bowel and breast (in post-menopausal women). Drinking alcohol may also lead to cancers of the stomach and breast (in pre-menopausal women).

Surprisingly, there is also probable evidence that alcohol can reduce the risk of kidney cancer. The risk has only been found to be lower for up to two alcoholic drinks a day. The increased risk on other cancer types from drinking alcohol is far greater than any benefit observed in terms of kidney cancer.



## Other health effects of alcohol

Alcohol has a number of negative effects as well as increasing cancer risk. Drinking alcohol at risky levels can damage the liver, heart and brain, increase the risk of high blood pressure and stroke, and cause harm to unborn babies. Having alcohol at a young age can affect brain development and lead to alcohol-related problems in later life. Alcohol is also associated with injury, violence, crime and motor vehicle accidents.

Just like any food or drink you consume (except water), alcoholic drinks contain energy (kilojoules, kJ). The energy in alcohol is often called 'empty kilojoules' because these drinks contain few nutrients but are very energy dense. For example, a full-strength can of beer contains 580kJ while a 150mL glass of red wine contains 430kJ. If mixed

with sugary drinks (mixers), alcoholic drinks can contain even more energy. For example, a can of bourbon and coke provides about 690kJ of energy. Cutting back on alcohol is a great strategy for consuming less kilojoules, while also reducing your cancer risk.

## But isn't alcohol good for my heart?

Previously, researchers believed that red wine had health benefits for heart disease. It now seems that the research on alcohol and heart disease overestimated the benefits. The World Health Organization and the Heart Foundation now say that there is no merit in promoting alcohol consumption as a preventive strategy.

There are other more effective ways to decrease your risk of heart disease, such as being physically active, having a healthy body weight, following a healthy diet and quitting smoking.

## What if I smoke?

The combined effects of smoking and drinking alcohol are much greater than the individual risks from either smoking or drinking alcohol alone. This is because alcohol makes it easier for the mouth and throat to absorb the cancer-causing chemicals in tobacco. Those who drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes have a much higher chance of getting head and neck cancers (cancer of the mouth, pharynx, larynx and oesophagus).

## So what should I do?

When it comes to cancer risk, there is **no safe level of alcohol consumption**. If you choose to drink, we recommend you drink within the National Health and Medical Council (NHMRC) guidelines, which advise no more than two standard drinks a day (for men and women).

