

# RETHINK: YOUR DRINKING

Based on Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines

## When it Comes to Alcohol Cancer Matters

### Alcohol and cancer

When it comes to alcohol, the more you drink, the higher your [risk of cancer](#). There is no clear safe limit for alcohol use.<sup>i</sup> It also doesn't matter what type of alcohol you drink - beer, spirits or wine - alcohol is alcohol. Research shows that drinking any type of alcohol increases your risk of cancer.

Drinking alcohol is a risk factor for developing cancer of the mouth, neck, throat, liver, breast, colon and rectum. Drinking about 3.5 drinks a day can:

- Double or even triple your risk of developing cancer of the mouth, pharynx, larynx and esophagus.
- Increase your risk of developing cancer of the colon and rectum, and breast by 1.5 times.<sup>ii</sup>

The less alcohol you drink, the more you'll lower your risk of cancer.

If you combine alcohol with tobacco use, cancer risks of the mouth, neck and throat increase even more.

### Alcohol and breast cancer

One or more [standard drinks](#) every day can increase your [risk of breast cancer](#). In 2010, 200-600 new cases of breast cancer in Ontario were linked to alcohol use.<sup>iii</sup> Learn more about how and why [alcohol affects women differently](#) than men.

### Lower your risk of cancer

If you don't drink, don't start. Even small amounts of alcohol can increase your risk for certain types of cancer.

If you choose to drink alcohol and want to reduce your risk of cancer, the Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) recommends that you:

- Have less than 1 standard drink a day for **women**
- Have less than 2 standard drinks a day for **men**
- Don't smoke

### Some ways to cut down

- Plan at least 2 non-drinking days every week to avoid developing a habit.
- Set limits and stick to them.
- Drink slowly: no more than 2 drinks in 3 hours.
- For every drink of alcohol, have one non-alcoholic drink.

### Choose a guideline

Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines [differ](#) from CCS's guidelines. They were created to help Canadians reduce their risk of injury and multiple chronic illnesses.<sup>ii</sup> Follow [CCS's guidelines](#) if you are specifically concerned about your risk of cancer.

#### References

- i. World Cancer Research Fund/American Institute for Cancer Research. Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer: a Global Perspective. 2007.
- ii. Cancer and Alcohol. Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse. 2014.
- iii. Cancer Risk Factors in Ontario: Alcohol. Cancer Care Ontario. 2014.