



alcohol screening

supporting health and wellness

Canada's guidance on alcohol and medical health for adults

- Risk to long-term health is **low** with weekly intake of 1-2 (standard) drinks, **moderate** with 3-6, and increasingly **high** with 7 drinks or more per week
- Risk of injury from occasions of use is **low** from 1-2 drinks, **moderate** with 3 drinks for females or 3-4 for males, and increasingly **high** from 4 drinks or more for females and from 5 or more for males on any single occasion
- The safest choice is to not drink at all, especially in situations where any impairment reduces ability to function safely and responsibly (e.g., when driving)
- It is safest not to drink while pregnant, planning to become pregnant or when breastfeeding

What is alcohol screening about?

Conventional alcohol screening poses standard questions to identify people who through their drinking are at risk for, or experiencing, what are widely recognized harms. In a less clinical application, screening questions may serve to draw attention to personal concerns someone has with their use of alcohol.

Screening may be carried out in various settings by professionals or non-specialists, including peers. It can also be done as a self-help exercise using web-based questionnaires. Whether online or in-person, screening paves the way for dialogue or perhaps brief intervention (e.g., summary internet advice, a quick conversation, one or more short counselling sessions). Brief intervention aims to help a person explore how to deal with potential or existing concerns.

In more formal use, screening questions ideally are few in number, clear, quite concise and simple to respond to, with implications that can readily be taken up in discussion. In more casual use, questions can be open-ended to elicit further disclosure of experience, meaning and perspective as well as invite reflection on an appropriate course of action.

How does Canada's reduced-risk drinking guidance relate to screening?

Reduced-risk drinking guidance connects directly with a clinical goal in screening to support medical health (absence of illness or avoidance of injury). It points to levels and patterns of risk that people can use to gauge how susceptible they might be to firsthand alcohol-related problems. General benchmarks of added risk for disease or harm from impairment invite consideration of self-imposed limits in weekly intake and episodes of use.

From a standpoint of broader holistic wellbeing, the guidance can be taken into account and weighed alongside non-medical benefits one values from drinking. It may serve to prompt reduction in use or greater intentionality in responsibly managing use when not abstaining.

Checking in on alcohol

- A few questions to help people evaluate their own experience of drinking – available at [screening.cisur.ca](https://www.cisur.ca/screening)
- If you would like to learn more about alcohol and your health you can also visit [KnowAlcohol.ca](https://www.knowalcohol.ca).

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