



# drinking guidance

## supporting health and wellness

### **From *Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health*:**

- Drinking no more than 6 drinks a week carries moderate risk; risk is lowered further by having no more than 2 drinks per week.
- Drinking no more than 3 drinks (for females) or 4 (for males) on any single occasion reduces risk of injury and harm; capping it at 2 drinks reduces that even more.
- In situations such as driving where impairment compromises safety and responsibility, drinking should be avoided.
- The safest choice is not to drink at all during pregnancy, when planning to become pregnant, or when breastfeeding.
- Children and youth should delay drinking until they reach legal age.

Canada has updated its recommendations to help people make decisions about alcohol. The advice was developed by a national group of researchers, working with prevention and treatment professionals and advocacy organizations, as well as responding to public input. It is based on the best available scientific evidence from around the world.

*Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health* encourages individuals to monitor and moderate their drinking, enables health practitioners to provide consistent relevant advice around medical concerns, and helps scientists, policy makers and other professionals assess risk for harm and costs from use of alcohol at provincial and national levels.

### **Why do Canadians need drinking guidance?**

Most Canadians drink alcohol and appreciate a range of non-medical benefits from doing so. Many of those who drink do not experience problems from their use. However, as a country, we consume more than 70% above the world average. How we drink causes a lot of alcohol-related harms and results in over \$16 billion in costs each year. Much of this is preventable.

The scientific evidence tells us that there are weekly and occasional levels of drinking that reduce likelihood of harm as well as health, legal and labour costs associated with use above those patterns. The new guidance helps those who drink to balance expected benefits with a consideration of the potential harms. It identifies degrees of drinking which will help lower harms or which raise the risk of problems.

The guidance is not intended to encourage people to use alcohol. It informs those who drink that drinking above certain thresholds will put them at added risk for chronic diseases or injuries. It also provides advice on when not to drink (e.g., when pregnant or planning to be pregnant, when driving a vehicle or doing any kind of dangerous physical activity), and it provides tips for reducing risk (e.g., drink slowly, eat before and while you are drinking, do not start drinking for supposed medical benefits).

This guidance may help us reduce the rising alcohol related costs for our communities by encouraging Canadians to adopt a culture of moderation in its use.

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