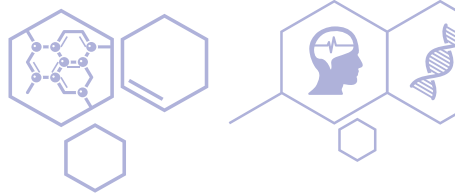
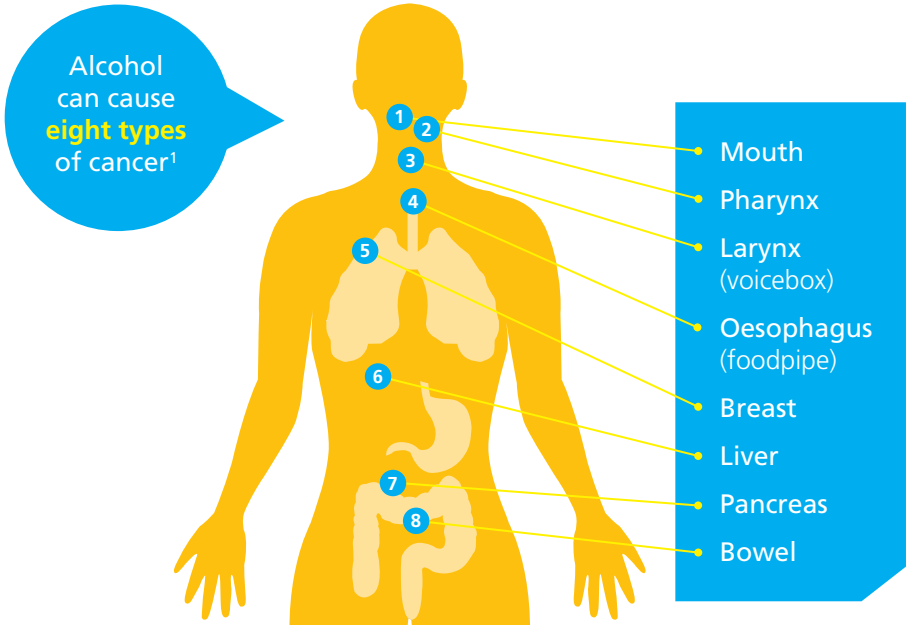


Alcohol, Cancer and Your Health



“Even a small amount of alcohol can increase your risk of cancer.”

Alcohol and cancer



900 people are diagnosed with alcohol related cancers in Ireland and around **500 people die** from these diseases each year²

You can reduce your chance of getting cancer if you avoid alcohol or only drink a little.

It's not just people who have a 'drinking problem' who are affected.

Even a small amount of alcohol can increase your risk of cancer. The more you drink, the higher your risk.

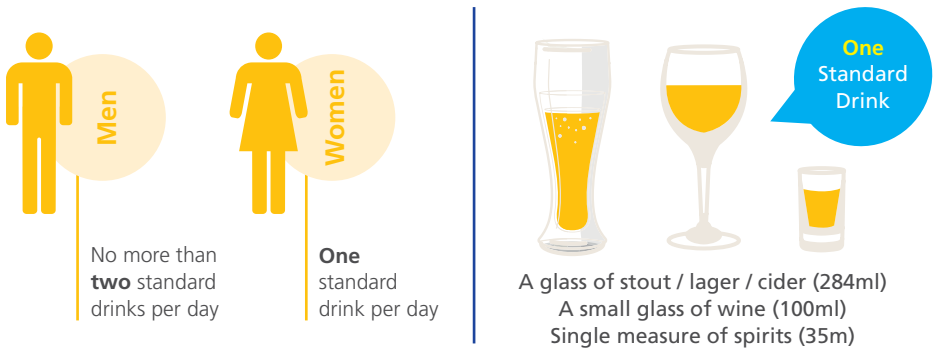
¹ World Health Organisation's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) Review of scientific evidence 2010.

² Laffoy M., Mc Carthy T., Mullen L., Byrne D., Martin J., Cancer Incidence and Mortality due to Alcohol: An Analysis of 10-Year Data; Ir Med J. 2013; 106 (10) 294-297.

Avoid or limit your intake of alcohol

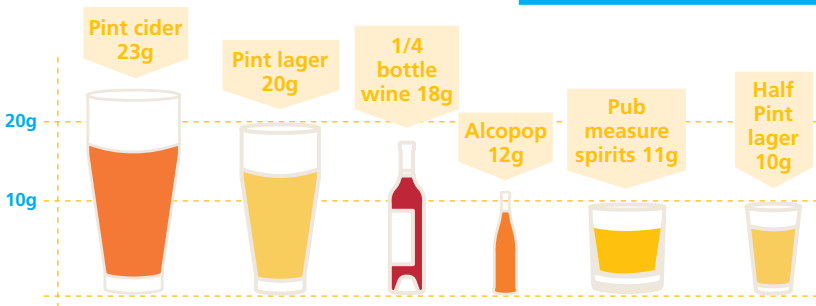
There is no 'safe' level of alcohol drinking, but the risk of cancer is lower the less alcohol you drink

You can limit your risk by drinking no more than one standard drink a day if you are a woman, and two standard drinks per day if you are a man.



A standard drink is...

Have at least **2 alcohol free** days every week, it's important to give your body a break



What do we know about alcohol and cancer?

The risk of mouth, head and neck cancer is even greater if you **smoke** and **drink alcohol**



Mouth, head and neck cancer

Alcohol is a major risk factor for certain head and neck cancers, particularly mouth cancer, throat cancer and cancer of the larynx (voice box).

People who have 3 or 4 standard drinks a day increase their risk of cancer by 2 to 3 times. The risk of mouth, head and neck cancer is even greater if you smoke and drink alcohol.

Oesophageal cancer

Alcohol is a major risk factor for a particular type of oesophageal cancer called oesophageal squamous

cell carcinoma. If you both drink and smoke, your risk of oesophageal cancer is far higher than if you just drink or smoke.

Breast cancer

More than 100 studies have looked at the link between alcohol and breast cancer in women. These studies have time and again found that drinking alcohol increases your breast cancer risk. Even small amounts of alcohol can increase the risk of breast cancer. A recent review of evidence showed that even 1 standard drink a day could

³ Seitz, H., et al. Epidemiology and pathophysiology of alcohol and breast cancer: Update 2012. Alcohol and Alcoholism, 2012.

What do we know about alcohol and cancer?

increase the risk of breast cancer by 5 per cent. And the risk increases the more a woman drinks³.

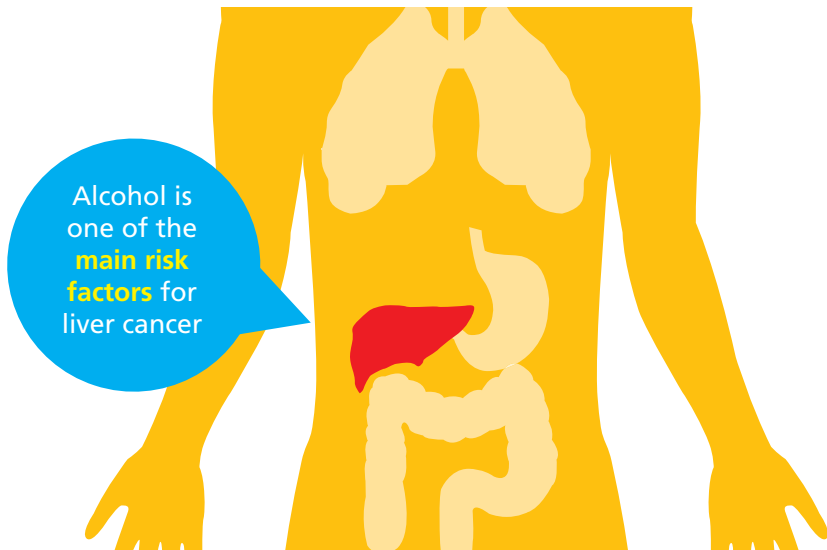
Liver cancer

Alcohol is one of the main risk factors for liver cancer. Heavy drinking can lead to cirrhosis, which is scarring of the liver as a result of continuous, long-term liver damage. Cirrhosis increases the risk of liver cancer. Alcohol also further increases the risk of liver cancer in people with hepatitis B or C infections (who are already at higher risk).

Bowel cancer

An analysis of 57 studies that examined the link between alcohol and bowel cancer showed that people who regularly drank three or four drinks a day had 1.5 times greater risk of bowel cancer than people who never drank.

Even fairly small amounts can have an effect. One very large study found that for every 2 standard drinks that a person drinks each day (less than a large glass of wine) their risk of bowel cancer goes up by 9 per cent⁴.



⁴ Ferrari, P., et al. Lifetime and baseline alcohol intake and risk of colon and rectal cancers in the European Prospective Investigation into cancer and nutrition (EPIC). *Int J Cancer*, 2007.

How does alcohol cause cancer?



Alcohol causes different types of cancer in different ways



Our bodies break down alcohol into acetaldehyde, which is a toxic chemical. Acetaldehyde can damage DNA (the genetic material that makes up genes) and stop our cells from repairing damage.

The breakdown of alcohol in our bodies can also generate harmful molecules called Reactive Oxygen Species. These molecules can damage DNA and proteins.

Alcohol weakens the body's ability to break down and absorb a variety of nutrients that may help to reduce your risk of cancer. These include vitamin A, folic acid, vitamin C, vitamin D and vitamin E.

Alcohol increases levels of the hormone oestrogen. Higher levels of oestrogen increase the risk of breast cancer.

Alcohol is high in calories and can cause weight gain.

Being overweight or obese is known to increase the risk of many types of cancer.



Some other facts about drinking alcohol



If you drink alcohol and smoke, your risk of cancer is **even higher**

Alcohol makes it easier for other harmful chemicals, such as those found in tobacco smoke, to enter the cells lining the mouth, throat, larynx (voicebox) and oesophagus (foodpipe).

This is why the combination of smoking and drinking is much more likely to cause cancers in the mouth, throat, larynx and oesophagus than either just smoking or drinking. If you both drink and smoke, your risk of getting these cancers is far higher.

Alcohol & tobacco together are estimated to account for three-quarters of oral cancer cases in Europe²

Some other facts about drinking alcohol



Alcohol increases the risk of developing more than

60 DISEASES

and medical conditions.

Even drinking small amounts can increase risk.

88 deaths every month in Ireland are directly linked to alcohol

Alcohol consumption in 2010 was 145% higher than the average amount consumed in 1960.

Over half of all Irish drinkers have a harmful pattern of drinking. That's 4 in 10 women and 7 in 10 men who drink.

In 2010, 26% of men and 17% of women reported drinking above the amounts recommended in HSE guidelines in an average week.



Are some drinks more harmful than others?

All types of alcohol increase the risk of cancer, including red wine.

It is the alcohol itself that does the damage. It does not matter if it is in the form of beer, wine or spirits.



Harmful drinking

Irish adults binge drink more than adults in any other European country.

Binge drinking is a term used to describe an occasion when we drink 6 or more standard drinks.



Binge drinking is a form of harmful drinking that is likely to increase the risk of accidents, injuries, violence and poisoning.

one or more times a month; this practice is known as risky single-occasion drinking or binge drinking.

Almost two-fifths (37.3%) of drinkers in the last year consumed six or more standard drinks on a single occasion

One-in-five (21.1%) drinkers engaged in binge drinking at least once a week.⁴

⁴ Long, J., and Mongan, D., Alcohol Consumption in Ireland 2013, Health Research Board.

Alcohol and calories

Alcohol is high in calories and can cause weight gain



There are around **600 calories** in a bottle of wine – the same as **two bars of chocolate!**



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Being **overweight or obese** is known to **increase the risk** of many types of **cancer**.

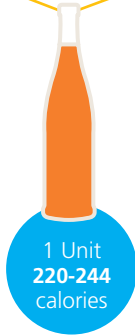
Alcohol & calories in standard drinks

1/2 Pint of regular beer, lager, cider (284ml)
alc. 3.5 - 6.0% vol.



1 Unit
68-286
calories

Alcopop bottle (275ml)
alc. 4.0 - 5.0% vol.



1 Unit
220-244
calories

Single measure of spirits (35ml)
alc. 37.5 - 40.0% vol.



1 Unit
72-78
calories

Glass of red/white wine (100ml)
alc. 9.5 - 14.5% vol.



1 Unit
66-94
calories

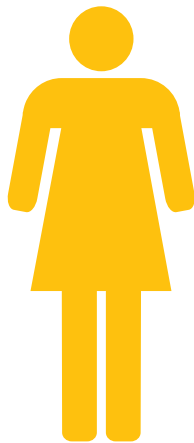
Source: Food Safety Authority of Ireland

Why should women drink less than men?



6 out of 10 Irish women now regularly drink too much

Drinking more than one standard drink a day is harmful to a woman's health



Women have lower body weights, less body water and more body fat than men, so it takes less alcohol for women to feel the effects and alcohol stays in a woman's body for longer, leading to an increased risk of ill health. Since the mid-1990s, Irish teenage girls have been drinking as much and sometimes more than their male friends.

The benefits of cutting down

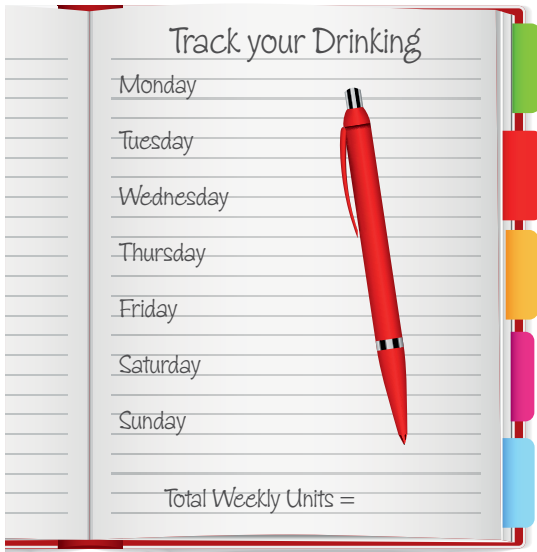
As well as reducing your risk of cancer, there are many other benefits to cutting down on alcohol

You will:

- Be better able to manage your weight
- Have healthier skin – alcohol dehydrates the skin
- Sleep better
- Have more energy
- Have more money
- Have improved mental health
- Have a lower risk of stroke and heart disease



Track your drinking



Keeping an eye on your drinking is important if you want to reduce the risk to your health.

Knowing how much you drink will allow you to see if you are within the recommended weekly limit.

Keep track of how much you drink over the course of a week. You could keep a card in your wallet or mark a kitchen calendar, if you have a smartphone; there are plenty of alcohol tracker apps available.



European Code Against Cancer

In Ireland and in Europe about 1 in 3 people will develop cancer at some stage in their life. The good news is that due to better treatments and spotting cancer earlier, survival rates are improving all the time. However, there are a number of steps you can take to reduce your risk of cancer:

1. If you smoke, **plan to quit**. Do not smoke in the presence of non-smokers.
2. Avoid **obesity**.
3. Undertake some **brisk physical activity** every day.
4. Eat a **healthy diet** by increasing your daily intake of fruit and vegetables and by eating a range of foods low in fat and high in fibre.
5. If you drink alcohol, whether beer, wine or spirits, try to stick to **two drinks per day** if you are a man or one drink per day if you are a woman.
6. Protect yourself in the sun and **avoid sunburn**, especially in children.
7. See your doctor if you **notice a lump**, a sore that does not heal (including in the mouth) or a mole that changes in shape, size or colour or bleeds.
8. See your doctor if you have **ongoing problems**, like a cough or hoarseness, a change in your bowel or bladder habits or unexplained weight loss.
9. Participate in **screening programmes** when invited to attend.



Further information and support services

- **HSE Drugs and Alcohol Helpline** 1800 459 459 | Mon - Fri 10am - 5pm
This is a free and confidential, active-listening helpline and email support service offering non-directive support, information, guidance and referral to anyone with a question or concern related to alcohol and drug use
www.drugs.ie/alcohol_info
- **Alcohol Action Ireland** Tel: 01 878 0610 | www.drinkhelp.ie
- **HSE Health Promotion** www.yourdrinking.ie
- **Al-Anon** (for relatives and friends of problem drinkers) Tel: 01 873 2699, between 10.30am – 2.30pm, Monday to Saturday, www.al-anon.org
- **Alateen** (for children of problem drinkers): Tel: 01 873 2699, between 10.30am – 2.30pm, Monday to Saturday, www.al-anonuk.org.uk
- **Alcoholics Anonymous** (a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism)
Tel: 01 8420700 | www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie
- **National Cancer Control Programme** Tel: 01 828 7100 | www.cancercontrol.hse.ie

Irish Cancer Society

To find out more about alcohol and cancer or about cancer in general:

- Visit us at www.cancer.ie
- Call our **Cancer Nurseline** on Freephone 1800 200 700 and speak to one of our cancer nurses for confidential advice, support and information. The Cancer Nurseline is open Monday to Thursday 9am - 6pm and Friday 9am - 5pm. You can also email us on cancernurseline@irishcancer.ie; or visit our Online Community at www.cancer.ie
- Visit our **Daffodil Centres** located in thirteen hospitals nationwide.

To keep in touch with the Society's activities, including cancer prevention campaigns and messages:



Like us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/IrishCancerSociety



Follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/IrishCancerSoc>



National Cancer Helpline:
Freefone 1800 200 700

www.cancer.ie

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Next revision: 2017

**We won't give up
until cancer does**

