



RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FOR LOW-RISK DRINKING

Note: These Guidelines are not intended to encourage people who choose to abstain for cultural, spiritual or other reasons to drink, nor are they intended to encourage people to commence drinking to achieve health benefits. People of low bodyweight or who are not accustomed to alcohol are advised to consume below these maximum limits.

Guideline 1

Do not drink in these situations:

When operating any kind of vehicle, tools or machinery; using medications or other drugs that interact with alcohol; engaging in sports or other potentially dangerous physical activities; working; making important decisions; if pregnant or planning to be pregnant; before breastfeeding; while responsible for the care or supervision of others; if suffering from serious physical illness, mental illness or alcohol dependence.

Guideline 2

If you drink, reduce *long-term* health risks by staying within these **average** levels:

Women

0–2 standard drinks* per day

No more than 10 standard drinks per week

Men

0–3 standard drinks* per day

No more than 15 standard drinks per week

Always have some non-drinking days per

week to minimize tolerance and habit formation. Do not increase drinking to the upper limits as health benefits are greatest at up to one drink per day. Do not exceed the daily limits specified in Guideline 3.

Guideline 3

If you drink, reduce *short-term* risks by choosing safe situations and restricting your alcohol intake:

Risk of injury increases with each additional drink in many situations. For both health and safety reasons, it is important not to drink more than:

- Three standard drinks* in one day for a woman
- Four standard drinks* in one day for a man

Drinking at these upper levels should only happen *occasionally* and always be consistent with the *weekly* limits specified in Guideline 2. It is especially important on these occasions to drink with meals and not on an

empty stomach; to have no more than two standard drinks in any three-hour period; to alternate with caffeine-free, non-alcoholic drinks; and to avoid risky situations and activities. Individuals with reduced tolerance, whether due to low bodyweight, being under the age of 25 or over 65 years old, are advised to never exceed Guideline 2 upper levels.

Guideline 4

When pregnant or planning to be pregnant: ***The safest option during pregnancy or when planning to become pregnant is to not drink alcohol at all.*** Alcohol in the mother's bloodstream can harm the developing fetus. While the risk from light consumption during pregnancy appears very low, there is no threshold of alcohol use in pregnancy that has been definitively proven to be safe.

Guideline 5

Alcohol and young people:
Alcohol can harm healthy physical and mental development of children and adolescents. ***Uptake of drinking by youth should be delayed at least until the late teens and be consistent with local legal drinking age laws.*** Once a decision to start drinking is made, drinking should occur in a safe environment, under parental guidance and at low levels (i.e., one or two standard drinks* once or twice per week). From legal drinking age to 24 years, it is recommended women never exceed two drinks per day and men never exceed three drinks in one day.

*A “standard drink” is equal to a 345 mL (about 12 oz.) bottle of 5% strength beer, cider or cooler; a 140 mL (about 5 oz.) glass of 12.5% strength wine; or a 40 mL (about 1.5 oz.) shot of 40% strength spirits (n.b. 1 Canadian standard drink = 13.6 g or 17.24 mL of ethanol).

Excerpt from the report, Alcohol and Health in Canada: A Summary of Evidence and Guidelines for Low-Risk Drinking, September 2010.