

# Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines

Drinking is a personal choice. If you choose to drink, these guidelines can help you decide when, where, why, and how.

## Guideline 1

Reduce your long-term health risks by drinking no more than:

- 10 drinks a week for women, with no more than 2 drinks a day most days
- 15 drinks a week for men, with no more than 3 drinks a day most days

Plan non-drinking days every week to avoid developing a habit.

## Guideline 2

Reduce your risk of injury and harm by drinking no more than 3 drinks (for women) and 4 drinks (for men) on any single occasion.

Plan to drink in a safe environment. Stay within the weekly limits outlined in Guideline 1.

## Guideline 3

Do not drink when you are

- driving a vehicle or using machinery and tools
- taking medicine or other drugs that interact with alcohol
- doing any kind of dangerous physical activity
- living with mental or physical health problems
- living with alcohol dependence
- pregnant or planning to be pregnant
- responsible for the safety of others
- making important decisions

## Guideline 4

If you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or before breastfeeding, the safest choice is to drink no alcohol at all.

## Guideline 5

If you are a child or youth, you should delay drinking until your late teens. Talk with your parents about drinking. Alcohol can harm the way your brain and body develop.

If you are drinking, plan ahead, follow local alcohol laws and stay within the limits outlined in Guideline 1.

### For these guidelines, "a drink" means:

- 341 ml (12 oz.) bottle of 5% alcohol beer, cider or cooler
- 142 ml (5oz.) glass of 12% alcohol wine
- 43 ml (1.5 oz.) serving of 40% distilled alcohol (rye, gin, rum, etc.)

Low-risk drinking helps to promote a culture of moderation.

Low-risk drinking supports healthy lifestyles.

### Tips

- Set limits for yourself and abide by them.
- Drink slowly. Have no more than 2 drinks in any 3 hours.
- For every drink of alcohol, have one non-alcoholic drink.
- Eat before and while you are drinking.
- Always consider your age, body weight and health problems that might suggest lower limits.
- While drinking may provide health benefits for certain groups of people, do not start to drink, or increase your drinking, for health benefits.

**Canada's Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines have been endorsed by:**

Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, Canadian Medical Association, Canadian Paediatric Society, Centre for Addictions Research of British Columbia, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health, Educ'alcool, MADD Canada, Pan-Canadian Public Health Network, Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada

***Reference:***

Butt, P., Beirness, D., Cesa, F., Gliksman, L., Paradis, C., & Stockwell, T. (2011). *Alcohol and health in Canada: A summary of evidence and guidelines for low-risk drinking*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse.