

drinking guidelines

supporting health and life



Coast to coast to coast, Canada now has one set of recommendations to help people make decisions about alcohol. They were developed by a national group of experts, working with prevention and treatment professionals, the alcohol industry, and advocacy organizations. They are based on the best available evidence from around the world.

Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines will enable health professionals to provide consistent advice, encourage individuals to monitor and moderate their drinking, create awareness about our cultural attitudes to alcohol, and collect data for monitoring the costs and harms of alcohol at provincial and national levels.

Why do Canadians need drinking guidelines?

Most Canadians drink alcohol. Many drinkers do not experience problems from their drinking. However, as a country, we consume more than 50% above the world average. How we drink causes a lot of alcohol-related problems and results in over \$14 billion in costs each year. Much of this is preventable.

The scientific evidence tells us that there are daily and weekly levels of drinking that will help prevent some of the harms and reduce the health, legal and labour costs. The new guidelines help drinkers to balance potential benefits with a consideration of the potential harms. They identify drinking patterns which will help prevent harms or which raise the risk of problems.

The guidelines are not intended to encourage people to drink. They inform drinkers that drinking above the suggested limits will put them at risk for injuries or chronic diseases. They also provide 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 they provide tips for reducing risk (e.g. drink slowly, eat before and while you are drinking, do not start drinking for health benefits).

While the guidelines will not change the drinking culture overnight, they may help us reduce the rising costs related to alcohol in our cities and provinces by encouraging Canadians to adopt a culture of moderation when it comes to alcohol.

Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines

- Reduce long-term health risks by drinking no more than 10 drinks a week for women or 15 drinks a week for men and avoid drinking on some days each week
- Reduce risk of injury and harm by drinking no more than 3 drinks (for women) or 4 drinks (for men) on any single occasion
- Do not drink in situations where any impairment reduces ability to function safely and responsibly (e.g., when driving)
- The safest choice is to not drink at all while pregnant, planning to become pregnant or before breastfeeding
- Children and adolescents should delay drinking until the late teens, talk with their parents about drinking, and never have more than 1 to 2 drinks at a time, and never more than 1 to 2 times per week
- From late teens to age 24, youth should never have more than 2 drinks a day (for females) or 3 drinks a day (for males)

Developed for BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information by:

