

Years of heavy drinking can lead to liver damage that may eventually lead to liver cancer.

Scientists are continuing to find evidence on how drinking alcohol leads to breast and colorectal cancers, as the association between alcohol and these diseases is apparent in study after study.

Drinking too much alcohol can reduce the amount of folate (a B vitamin) we absorb from healthy foods to maintain healthy DNA in our genes.

## ALCOHOL AFFECTS WOMEN AND MEN DIFFERENTLY

Women's risk for breast cancer, especially diagnosed after menopause, increases with greater alcohol consumption. In fact, for each standard drink a day there appears to be approximately an 11 percent increase in postmenopausal breast cancer risk. Women who are at high risk for breast cancer should consider not drinking any alcohol.

Women metabolize alcohol more slowly than men, so alcohol stays in a woman's bloodstream longer.

Women also have less water in their bodies than men do, so alcohol is less able to dissolve and remains more concentrated in women.

Liver disease and other alcohol-related problems develop faster in women than in men who drink the same amount.

## ABOUT AICR

The American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) is the cancer charity that fosters cancer prevention and survivorship through healthy diets, physical activity and body weight. About one-third of the most common cancers could be prevented this way. By raising awareness of this message, we hope that many thousands of lives will be saved. The education and research programs of AICR are funded almost entirely by donations from the public.

We fund cutting edge cancer research and help people make choices that reduce their chances of developing cancer. We are part of a global network of charities that are committed to preventing cancer.

## THE FACTS ABOUT

# Alcohol



AICR's expert report, *Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer: a Global Perspective* and our Continuous Update Project found strong evidence that alcoholic beverages increase risk of developing the following cancers:

- mouth
- pharynx
- larynx
- esophagus
- pre- and post-menopausal breast
- colorectal
- liver

Your risk of lung cancer also rises dramatically if you drink alcohol and smoke.

## THE RECOMMENDATION

### Limit Alcohol

Even small amounts of alcohol pose some cancer risk, so for lowest risk, AICR recommends not drinking alcohol at all. However, if you do drink alcohol, limit your intake to no more than two drinks a day for men and one drink a day for women.

## THE RESEARCH

AICR's expert report found that the amount of alcohol consumed is what matters, not the type of alcoholic drink.

Studies link heavy drinking with cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, osteoporosis, malnutrition, inflammation of the pancreas, brain damage, liver cirrhosis, accidents, violence and suicide. Alcohol causes birth defects too: if you are pregnant or may become pregnant, do not drink alcohol.

Alcoholic drinks are high in calories and can contribute to weight gain, another cancer risk factor.

### How does drinking alcohol increase cancer risk?

Some tissues in the body, such as the mouth and esophagus, are directly exposed to alcohol. This can cause cell damage that sparks the cancer process.

## How much is “one drink”?

Drink	Amount	Alcohol %	Calories (approx.)
Beer, regular	12 oz.	5% (ale and stout have 6-10%)	140-180
Beer, light	12 oz.	3%	70-110
Liquor, 100 proof	1.5 oz.	50%	123 (without mixer)
Liquor, 80 proof	1.5 oz.	40%	97 (without mixer)
Wine, table	5 oz.	12%	100-140 (dry wines are in the lower range)
Wine, fortified (e.g., sherry or port)	3-4 oz.	16-22%	135-180 sherry 282-376 port
Brandy	1.5 oz.	40%	97
Alcoholic lemonade	12 oz.	3-7%	220

Source: National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism  
<http://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov>.

The concentration of alcohol differs according to type of drink. Although standard sizes vary, each standard size has the same amount of alcohol.

## How to Cut Down

Any reduction in alcohol consumption will lower your risk for developing cancer. Here are a few tips to help you cut down.

- Opt for the smallest serving size; dilute drinks with water, ice and/or club soda as much as possible.
- Sip slowly and avoid pressure from others to drink faster.
- Alternate between alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks like club soda or low-sodium tomato or vegetable juice with lemon and a couple drops of hot sauce.
- Aim to keep some days each week alcohol-free.
- Stock your refrigerator with plenty of alternative beverages like sparkling or spring water flavored with citrus slices and seltzers.
- Buy low- or no-alcohol beer or wine.
- For celebrations, sparkling apple juice or club soda mixed with 100% cranberry juice are both refreshing and suitable.
- Keep track of how much you’re drinking and avoid topping off one drink with more alcohol.
- Be aware that restaurants often serve larger-than-standard drinks.



## NEED MORE HELP?

### For cancer prevention:

Visit [www.aicr.org](http://www.aicr.org) for more information about diet, physical activity, weight and cancer prevention and survivorship. You can download additional brochures or call 1-800-843-8114 to request up to 6 free individual copies, including:

- *10 Ways to Reduce Your Cancer Risk*
- *The Cancer Fighters in Your Food*
- *The Facts on Inflammation*

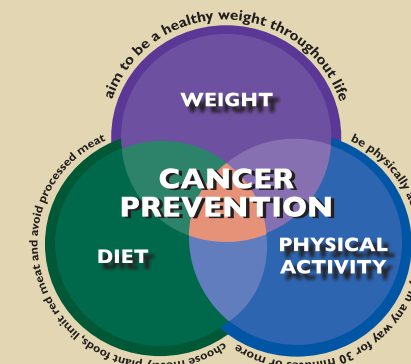
You can also visit the AICR Hotline at [www.aicr.org](http://www.aicr.org) for answers to your questions about diet and cancer; or call 1-800-843-8114 Monday-Friday, 9 am-5 pm ET. A registered dietitian will return your call.

American Institute for Cancer Research  
 1759 R Street, NW, P.O. Box 97167  
 Washington, DC 20090-7167  
 1-800-843-8114 or 202-328-7744

### For more information about alcohol and problem drinking:

The National Institutes on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism  
 5635 Fishers Lane, MSC 9304  
 Bethesda, MD 20892-9304  
 301-443-3860  
[www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov)

Alcoholics Anonymous (local telephone listing)  
 World Services, Inc.  
 P.O. Box 459  
 475 Riverside Drive at West 120th Street  
 New York, NY 10115  
 212-870-3400  
[www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)



## AICR Guidelines for Cancer Prevention

The choices you make about food, physical activity and weight management can reduce your chances of developing cancer.

- Choose mostly plant foods, limit red meat and avoid processed meat.
- Be physically active every day in any way for 30 minutes or more.
- Aim to be a healthy weight throughout life.

*And always remember—do not smoke or chew tobacco.*

You can support AICR’s life-saving research and education efforts in a variety of ways:

- Make a donation online at [www.aicr.org](http://www.aicr.org);
- Write to AICR, 1759 R Street, NW, P.O. Box 97167, Washington, DC 20090-7167; or
- Include a bequest in your will.

For more information, contact our Gift Planning Department at 1-800-843-8114.