



[cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org) | 1.800.227.2345

Alcohol Use and Cancer

- [Cancers linked to alcohol use](#)
- [Does the type of alcohol matter?](#)
- [How does alcohol raise cancer risk?](#)
- [Other long-term health effects from drinking alcohol](#)
- [What does the American Cancer Society recommend?](#)
- [Alcohol use during and after cancer treatment](#)

Alcohol use is one of the most important preventable risk factors for cancer, along with tobacco use and excess body weight. Alcohol use accounts for about 6% of all cancers and 4% of all cancer deaths in the United States. Yet many people don't know about the link between alcohol use and cancer.

Cancers linked to alcohol use

Alcohol use has been linked with cancers of the:

- [Mouth](#)¹
- [Throat](#)² (pharynx)
- [Voice box](#)³ (larynx)

Effects on body weight

Too much alcohol can add extra calories to the diet, which can contribute to weight gain in some people. Being [overweight or obese](#)¹⁰ is known to increase the risks of many types of cancer.

Along with these effects, alcohol may contribute to cancer growth in other, unknown ways.

Other long-term health effects from drinking alcohol

Most people know about the short-term effects of drinking alcohol, such as its effects on mood, concentration, judgment, and coordination. But alcohol can also have longer-term health effects. These can vary from person to person.

For some people, alcohol is addictive. Drinking can become heavier over time, leading

7. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/breast-cancer.html
8. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/stomach-cancer.html
9. www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/tobacco.html
10. www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity/body-weight-and-cancer-risk.html
11. www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity/acs-guidelines-nutrition-physical-activity-cancer-prevention.html

References

American Cancer Society. *Cancer Facts & Figures 2020*. Atlanta, Ga: American Cancer Society; 2020.

Allen NE, Beral V, Casabonne D, et al. Moderate alcohol intake and cancer incidence in women. *J Natl Cancer Inst*. 2009;101:296-305.

Cao Y, Willett WC, Rimm EB, Stampfer MJ, Giovannucci EL. Light to moderate intake of alcohol, drinking patterns, and risk of cancer: Results from two prospective US cohort studies. *BMJ*. 2015 Aug 18;351:h4238.

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). Alcohol and Public Health: Frequently Asked Questions. 2020. Accessed at www.cdc.gov/alcohol/faqs.htm on June 2, 2020.

Chen WY, Rosner B, Hankinson SE, Colditz GA, Willett WC. Moderate alcohol

Rock CL, Doyle C, Demark-Wahnefried W, et al. Nutrition and physical activity guidelines for cancer survivors. *CA Cancer J Clin.* 2012;62:243-274.

Rock CL, Thomson C, Gansler T, et al. American Cancer Society guideline for diet and physical activity for cancer prevention. *CA Cancer J Clin.* 2020;70(4). doi:10.3322/caac.21591. Accessed at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.3322/caac.21591> on June 9, 2020.

World Cancer Research Fund/American Institute for Cancer Research. Continuous Update Project Expert Report 2018. Alcoholic drinks and the risk of cancer. Accessed at <https://www.wcrf.org/dietandcancer/exposures/alcoholic-drinks> on June 2, 2020.

Last Revised: June 9, 2020

Written by

The American Cancer Society medical and editorial content team
(<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/acs-medical-content-and-news-staff.html>)

Our team is made up of doctors and oncology certified nurses with deep knowledge of cancer care as well as journalists, editors, and translators with extensive experience in medical writing.

American Cancer Society medical information is copyrighted material. For reprint requests, please see our Content Usage Policy (www.cancer.org/about-us/policies/content-usage.html).

cancer.org | 1.800.227.2345