

Understanding the Risks of Alcohol Consumption

Drinking alcohol is often central to many parts of American culture, such as sporting events, holidays, and gatherings with family and friends. But did you know that drinking alcohol in even small amounts can pose risks to your health? Keep reading to learn more about what alcohol does to the body, and how to avoid the health issues that can be associated with alcohol consumption.

The Impact of Drinking Alcohol

Alcohol is associated with a wide range of physical, mental, and emotional effects. We often hear about alcohol leading to liver disease, high blood pressure, and heart failure.

Alcohol consumption is also [the third-leading preventable cause of cancer in the United States](#), leading to approximately 100,000 cancer cases and 20,000 deaths from cancer per year.

Additionally, [alcohol can lead to depression, anxiety, and other mental health challenges](#), or make these conditions worse. Drinking too much also makes poor decisions more likely, such as drunk driving. [Every day, about 34 people die in crashes involving a drunk driver](#): about one person every 42 minutes.

Ultimately, drinking alcohol can increase your risk of injury and death, both for yourself and others.



What Happens to Your Body When You Drink Alcohol

[Among other effects](#), alcohol:

- Makes it harder for your body to absorb and use the nutrients that keep you healthy, such as Vitamins A, B1, B6, C, D, E, and K.
- Can cause imbalances in the ecosystem of bacteria, viruses, and fungi that support digestion, the immune system, and vitamin production – also known as the gut microbiome.
- Disrupts [quality sleep](#).
- Can reduce cognitive function, memory, and concentration by damaging brain cells.

How Much is Too Much Alcohol?

Understanding the effects of drinking alcohol is an ongoing topic of research, and scientists and researchers have not reached a general consensus about “how much is too much.” However, many experts agree that even small amounts of alcohol can pose health risks, a conclusion endorsed by the previous [U.S. Surgeon General](#), the [U.S. Alcohol Policy Alliance](#), and the [World Health Organization](#).

Are There Any Benefits to Drinking Alcohol?

Studies of alcohol are ongoing, complex, and often yield mixed results. Over time, some studies have suggested slight benefits of drinking alcohol in moderation, leading to a widely accepted understanding that light drinking may be beneficial for cardiovascular health. However, recent studies are challenging these claims. Regardless, even if alcohol slightly reduces the risk of one condition, it can increase the risk of others.

Taking the Next Step to Protect Your Health

Eliminating or significantly reducing your alcohol intake supports full-body health. For more information about alcohol consumption, or for support in reducing your intake, contact a healthcare professional.

Sources

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