

# Low Risk Alcohol Drinking

## Guidelines

Drinking alcohol **ALWAYS** has some risk. There is a way to drink that will limit your risk of long- and short-term harm.

### The Limits

Over time, even moderate drinking can increase your risk of some chronic diseases, including high blood pressure, depression and many forms of cancer. To reduce your long-term health risks, follow these guidelines:

**Women:** 0 to 2 drinks a day, up to 10 drinks a week

**Men:** 0 to 3 drinks a day, up to 15 drinks a week

Once in a while you might have an extra drink, but it's important to stay within the weekly limits.

Pick a couple of non-drinking days each week. This will help you to avoid developing a drinking habit.

### Once in a while

The more alcohol you drink on any one occasion, the more likely you are to be hurt or injured. Reduce your short-term safety risks by limiting how much you drink at any one time.

**Women:** no more than 3 drinks

**Men:** no more than 4 drinks

Stay within your weekly limits.

### Children and youth

Children and youth should not drink before they reach Nova Scotia's legal age of 19. A young person's brain and body continue to develop into the late teens and early 20s. Alcohol can harm mental and physical development. It is safer to delay drinking for as long as possible.

### *Is it OK to drink my weekly limit on the weekend?*

No. The weekly limits are designed to be just that – a weekly limit, not a daily or weekend limit.

Even if you only drink heavily once in a while, it increases your risk of injury and long-term health problems.

### Pregnant? Breastfeeding?

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

If you are breastfeeding, there will be alcohol in your breast milk after you drink. If you plan to drink alcohol, there are things you can do to make sure the alcohol doesn't reach your baby. For example, you can breastfeed right before you drink alcohol so the alcohol can leave your breast milk before your baby's next feed. Talk to your health care provider about how you can continue to breastfeed.

### When the limit is zero

Sometimes it isn't safe to drink alcohol. Do not drink when:

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

# Canada's **Low Risk Alcohol Drinking** Guidelines\*

## To use these guidelines...

### Set limits for yourself and stick to them.

- Stick to the daily and weekly limits.
- Drink slowly. Have no more than 2 drinks in any 3 hours.
- For every alcoholic drink, have one non-alcoholic drink.
- Eat before and while you are drinking.
- To avoid developing a habit, have non-drinking days every week.
- Always consider your age, body weight and any health problems. These might make lower limits, or not drinking at all, a good idea.

### Pay attention to your surroundings when drinking.

- Your safety is affected by where, when and with whom you drink.

### Don't drink "for your health."

- Starting to drink, or increasing your drinking, will not improve your health.
  - Only middle-aged men and women get health benefits from drinking small amounts of alcohol.
  - Any health benefits are cancelled if you drink more than the recommended daily limit even once in a while.
  - Your risk of getting some kinds of cancer increases when you drink as little as one drink per day.

### Talk with the young people in your life about the risks of drinking.

- Make sure they know that in Nova Scotia:
  - It is illegal to drink alcohol if they are under the age of 19.
  - It is illegal for anyone to buy or give alcohol to anyone under the age of 19.
- Teens:
  - **Help teenagers find ways to delay drinking for as long as possible.**
  - If they choose to drink, they should never have more than 1 – 2 drinks at a time, and never drink more than 1 – 2 times per week.
- Young people in their late teens to age 24:
  - Be sure they know that the brain continues to develop into the early 20s. Because of this, they should never exceed the daily and weekly amounts outlined in "The Limits".

### What does "a drink" mean?



- 341 ml (12 oz.) bottle of 5% beer, cider, or cooler



- 142 ml (5 oz.) glass of 12% wine



- 43 ml (1.5 oz.) serving of 40% distilled alcohol (rye, gin, rum, etc.)

To find out more: [www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/addictions/alcohol/](http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/addictions/alcohol/)

