



# Alcohol and Cancer

## Why am I being warned about alcohol and cancer?



- Alcoholic beverages are on the [Proposition 65](#) list because they can cause cancer.
- Consuming alcoholic beverages increases the risk of cancers of the mouth, throat, voice box, esophagus, liver, breast, colon and rectum.

## How does alcohol impact cancer risk?

Alcohol increases cancer risk by breaking down in the body to acetaldehyde, a chemical that can cause cancer by damaging DNA. Drinking alcoholic beverages can also increase blood levels of estrogen, which is linked to breast cancer. Alcohol can also increase cancer risk in other ways, and may hurt the body's ability to process certain nutrients.

According to the National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society, the risk of cancer increases with the amount of alcohol consumed. Even moderate drinking increases the risk of certain cancers, including breast cancer in women.

People who use both alcohol and tobacco have much greater risks of developing cancers of the mouth and throat than people who use either alcohol or tobacco alone.

## What is moderate drinking?

According to the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) by the US Department of Health and Human Services and US Department of Agriculture, moderate alcohol consumption is defined as having up to 1 drink per day for women, and up to 2 drinks per day for men.

## Are certain groups at greater risk?

A person's risk of alcohol-related cancers is influenced by his or her genes, specifically the genes that relate to chemical reactions involved in breaking down alcohol. Some people, particularly those of Chinese, Korean, or Japanese descent, may carry a gene that limits their ability to detoxify alcohol, and increases their risk for cancers of the mouth, throat, voice box, and esophagus.

## How can I reduce my risk?

If you choose to drink alcohol, do so in moderation. If you are concerned that you may have a drinking problem, call 1-800-662-HELP (662-4357) to find out about support and treatment options in English or in Spanish. This is the toll-free telephone number for alcohol and drug information, and for treatment referral assistance, for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the Department of Health and Human Services.

**For more information:****General Fact Sheets and Resources**

- National Cancer Institute
  - ▶ Alcohol and Cancer Risk  
<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/alcohol/alcohol-fact-sheet>
- US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)  
National Institutes of Health (NIH)
  - ▶ Alcohol Flush Signifies Increased Cancer Risk Among East Asians  
<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/alcohol-flush-signals-increased-cancer-risk-among-east-asians>
- American Cancer Society
  - ▶ Alcohol Use and Cancer  
<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-causes/diet-physical-activity/alcohol-use-and-cancer.html>
- California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA)  
Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)
  - ▶ Alcohol and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs)  
<https://www.p65warnings.ca.gov/fact-sheets/alcohol-and-fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorders-fasds>

**Proposition 65**

- California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA)  
Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)
  - ▶ Proposition 65: Background  
<https://www.p65warnings.ca.gov/fag>
  - ▶ Proposition 65: The List of Chemicals  
<https://www.p65warnings.ca.gov/chemicals>