

## THE COST OF ALCOHOL-RELATED HARM IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Nearly 1 in 14 Western Australians drink daily.



Nearly 1 in 5 Western Australians drink at levels likely to cause them harm or ill health.



**\$155m**

in hospital costs  
in 2014



**113,549**

hospital bed  
days used  
in 2014



1 person every

**27mins**

was hospitalised for an  
alcohol-attributable  
condition in 2014



**545**

total alcohol-  
related deaths  
in 2013

For more information or to complete a two minute assessment tool to see how reducing your drinking will reduce your risks, visit:

[alcoholthinkagain.com.au](http://alcoholthinkagain.com.au)

**alcoholthinkagain**

How alcohol can  
damage your body

**alcoholthinkagain**



## Alcohol and cancer

Alcohol is classified as a Group 1 carcinogen. This is the highest level of certainty, like for tobacco smoke and asbestos.

There are many ways alcohol can cause cancer:

1. Alcohol is broken down and forms acetaldehyde. Acetaldehyde can damage cells because it can bond with DNA causing new cells to be made incorrectly.
2. Alcohol can also cause direct tissue damage, and this can increase the absorption of other cancer causing agents those cells come into contact with.
3. Alcohol can influence hormone levels, increasing cancer risk.
4. Alcohol can increase the risk of liver cancer by causing liver cirrhosis.

There is strong evidence that alcohol can cause cancer at these seven sites in the body:

- Larynx
- Oesophagus
- Liver
- Bowel
- Female breast
- Oropharynx
- Stomach

## Alcohol and the digestive system

Alcohol can damage some of the organs within the digestive system, through contact and once it is in the blood stream.



### Mouth and throat

Drinking alcohol increases the risk of mouth and throat cancer and even more so when combined with smoking.



### Oesophagus

Alcohol can damage the cells that line the oesophagus. High alcohol consumption is a risk factor for squamous cell carcinoma (cancer) of the oesophagus.



### Stomach

One-off and regular drinking can interfere with the functions of the stomach which include affecting gastric acid production, damaging the mucous cells and causing discomfort.



### Liver

The breakdown of alcohol mainly takes place in the liver. Alcohol can cause fatty liver, damage liver cells and cause inflammation.



### Large intestine

Alcohol comes into contact with the large intestine via the bloodstream, increasing the risk of cancer.

### Facts and figures

In 2013, an estimated 13 people died per month from alcohol-related cancers in Western Australia.

In 2014, the number of alcohol-related cancer hospitalisations was estimated at 1,002.

## Alcohol and the cardiovascular system

Alcohol can impact the cardiovascular system in a number of ways.

Regularly drinking alcohol can increase heart rate, make blood pressure rise and weaken the heart muscles, which means it can't pump blood around the body as efficiently.

There is evidence that regularly drinking more than two standard drinks can increase the risk of alcohol-caused:

- Heart attack
- Stroke, both ischemic (blockage of an artery) and haemorrhagic (an artery tearing and bleeding)

Regularly drinking more than two standard drinks increases your risk of alcohol-related disease.

Reduce your drinking to reduce your risk.

### Facts and figures

In 2013 it is estimated that 1 person per month died from alcohol-related stroke in Western Australia.

In 2014, Western Australians were hospitalised a total of 59 times for conditions due to alcohol-related stroke.