



In 2019, almost 1 in 5 Western Australians reported drinking at levels likely to cause them long-term health harms.



642

In 2017, 642 people died from an alcohol condition in Western Australia.

Alcohol-caused cancer was responsible for almost



one in four
of those deaths.

This equates to one alcohol-caused cancer death every third day.



In 2018, Western Australians were hospitalised a total of

20,248

times for conditions caused by alcohol.

This equates to

55

hospitalisations every day.

In 2018, more than 1,000 hospitalisations were due to an alcohol-caused cancer, equating to three hospitalisations every day.



This resulted in an estimated 5,286 bed-days.



At a cost of approximately \$14 million.

Alcohol increases your risk of cancer

Reduce your drinking to reduce your risk

For more information and ways to reduce your risk, head to alcoholthinkagain.com.au

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How does alcohol cause cancer?

Alcohol is classified as a Group 1 carcinogen, which means there is no doubt it causes cancer, just like tobacco and asbestos.

The risk of developing an alcohol-caused cancer increases with the amount and frequency of alcohol use.

There are many ways alcohol can cause cancer.

1. Alcohol is broken down in the body and forms acetaldehyde. Acetaldehyde is a cell poison and carcinogen (cancer-causing agent), and damages cells by disrupting our DNA.
2. Alcohol can cause direct tissue damage in the mouth, pharynx, oesophagus, colon and liver.
3. Alcohol also increases the ability of other carcinogens (such as tobacco) to cause damage to cells in the mouth, pharynx, oesophagus, colon and liver.
4. Alcohol can influence hormone levels, increasing cancer risk, particularly in the breast.
5. Alcohol can reduce folate absorption, which can result in changes in the cell, potentially making it more likely to become cancerous.
6. Alcohol and many of the mixers (e.g. soft drink) we add are high in calories, which can contribute to weight gain and obesity. Being above a healthy weight increases the risk of 13 different cancers.

The less alcohol you drink, the lower your risk of developing an alcohol-caused cancer.

Alcohol causes cancer in 7 sites of the body.

There is strong evidence that alcohol causes cancer in at least seven sites of the body.



Mouth, throat and oesophagus

Alcohol damages the cells lining the mouth, throat (pharynx and larynx) and oesophagus as it enters the mouth and is swallowed, causing cancer in these parts of the body.



Female breast

There are a number of potential ways that alcohol causes breast cancer in females, including by increasing the levels of hormones in the blood.



Liver

The liver is responsible for breaking down alcohol in the body, which results in the conversion of alcohol to acetaldehyde. Alcohol damages the liver by causing a build-up of fat, inflammation and scarring, which can lead to liver cancer.



Colon and rectum

Alcohol can cause cancer in the colon and rectum by multiple pathways including by acetaldehyde, damaging DNA and stopping cells from repairing this damage.

Reduce your drinking to reduce your risk.

Making small changes to your drinking can help reduce your risk of developing alcohol-caused cancers.

Have a few alcohol-free days each week.

Having alcohol-free days each week will help you stay healthy and break bad habits. If you're already having alcohol-free days each week, try to add another. Head online to alcoholthinkagain.com.au to see the benefits of reducing how many times a week you drink by using the 'drinking levels and your risk' tool.

Keep track of your drinking by counting your drinks.

Actively counting how many drinks you have each drinking occasion can contribute to reduced alcohol use overall. If you haven't tried counting your drinks before, give it a go. If you've adopted this strategy occasionally before, try to do so more frequently.

Swap to low or no alcohol alternatives.

Low and no alcohol products can be a good alternative for people who want to reduce their drinking – they have the same or similar taste but contain less alcohol.

Limit how much alcohol you keep in the house.

If it's not there, you can't drink it! If you're not ready to make your house a drink-free zone, avoid stocking up on alcohol at the next trip to the bottle shop. The more alcohol we buy, the more likely we are to drink it sooner than we had intended. The more alcohol you buy, the more likely you are to drink it sooner than intended.

Find ways to change your routine.

If your routine includes relaxing with a drink, change it up by going outside to get some fresh air and exercise. If pouring a glass of wine or having a beer in the evenings is your go-to, wait until dinner is ready to have that first drink.