

Alcohol use in Western Australia

Long-term harms from alcohol.



Alcohol is classified as a **Group 1 carcinogen** and is linked to more than 200 diseases, including **7 types of cancer**.

The more alcohol is drunk by Australians, the more harm individuals, families and our broader community experience.

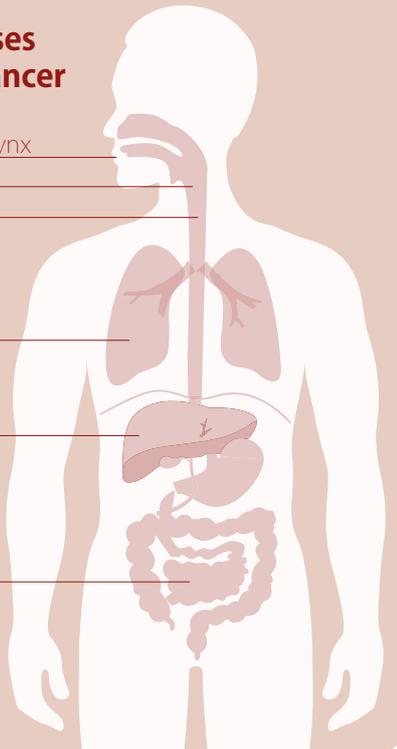
Alcohol causes 7 types of cancer

Mouth and pharynx
Larynx
Oesophagus

Breast

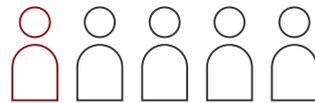
Liver

Bowel



The more people drink over a lifetime, the higher the risk of dying from alcohol-related disease or injury.^{2,3} The less alcohol a person drinks, the lower their risk of experiencing alcohol-caused disease.^{2,3}

A significant proportion of West Australians drink alcohol at high risk of long-term harm



Almost **1 in 5** (17.2%) Western Australians aged 14 years and older drank more than two standard drinks per day on average in 2019.⁴ This means that around 400,000 Western Australians drank at levels considered to be harmful for their long-term health.⁴

Alcohol contributes significantly to a wide range of chronic diseases in WA

- » Alcohol use contributes to the loss of healthy years of life, and the majority are a result of long-term health harms such as cancer, cardiovascular disease and mental health conditions.⁵
- » Nationally, alcohol causes around **3%** of all cancers (equivalent to **3,500 cases** each year).⁶
- » In 2018, Western Australians were hospitalised **8,045** times for long-term, alcohol-attributable conditions, equating to 22 per day.⁷

Each month in 2018, Western Australians were hospitalised:⁷

41 times due to alcohol-caused liver disease

84 times due to alcohol-caused cancers

109 times due to alcohol-caused digestive conditions

338 times due to alcohol-caused mental and neurological disorders.

Reduce your drinking to reduce your risk.

alcoholthinkagain

Cancer Council WA

We have lost many West Australians to alcohol-caused disease

In 2017, there were **359 deaths** from alcohol-caused disease, including 154 from alcohol-caused cancers and 75 from alcohol-caused liver disease.⁷



The cost of long-term alcohol-related harm in Western Australia is high

In 2018, 35,671 bed-days were used for long-term alcohol-related conditions in WA at a cost of **\$59.6 million**.⁷



Reducing alcohol use can reduce the risk of alcohol-caused disease

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

To reduce how much or how frequently you drink, try:

- » having a few alcohol-free days each week
- » keeping track of your drinking by counting your drinks
- » swapping to low or no alcohol alternatives
- » limiting how much alcohol you keep in the house
- » changing up your routine to include more activities that don't involve alcohol.

Thousands of cancers could be prevented if Australians limit their drinking to low-risk levels

Over the next 25 years, if Australians limited their drinking to no more than two standard drinks per day, almost **30,000 cases** of cancer could be prevented.⁶

References

¹ World Cancer Research Fund/American Institute for Cancer Research. Continuous Update Project Expert Report 2018. Alcoholic drinks and the risk of cancer. Available at dietandcancerreport.org

² National Health and Medical Research Council. Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol. 2009. Available from: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-guidelines-reduce-health-risks-drinking-alcohol>

³ Griswold, M, Fullman N, Hawley C, et al. Alcohol use and burden for 195 countries and territories, 1990–2016: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016. *The Lancet*. 2018; 392 (10152): 1015-1035.

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019. Drug Statistics series no. 32. PHE 270. Canberra: AIHW; 2020.

⁵ World Health Organization. Global status report on alcohol and health 2018. WHO: Geneva; 2018.

⁶ Wilson LF, Antonnson A, Green AC, et al. How many cancer cases and deaths are potentially preventable? Estimates for Australia in 2013. *International Journal of Cancer*. 2018; 142(4): 691-701.

⁷ Epidemiology Branch, Department of Health. Alcohol-attributable hospitalisation and death data [Unpublished]. 2019.