

Alcohol and cancer



Alcohol is a cause of cancer similar to smoking tobacco. Avoiding and/or drinking less alcohol throughout life can help protect against cancer. Making alcohol less available, less affordable and less promoted in our neighbourhoods would help people to avoid and/or drink less.

Not drinking or drinking less alcohol is a key way to prevent alcohol-related harm* and health problems including many cancers. Alcohol-related cancers include those of the mouth, throat, voice box, oesophagus (food pipe), liver, bowel and breast (pre and post-menopausal).

There is no safe level of alcohol consumption in relation to cancer. Avoiding alcohol is the best way to prevent some cancers. Drinking even small amounts of alcohol regularly is associated with cancer risk. The less alcohol you drink, the lower the cancer risk. More alcohol increases risk.

*For more information on the harms caused by alcohol see: [Alcohol and You: Facts and Effects](#) and other resources at Health Navigator, [What harm can alcohol cause?](#)

Alcohol can contribute to weight gain so less alcohol can reduce the risk of weight-related cancers.

Drinking and smoking together (rather than drinking or smoking on its own) can significantly increase the risk of some cancers.



Key messages

- Avoiding alcohol and/or reducing alcohol is the best way to reduce the risk of many cancers.
- There is no safe level of alcohol consumption that protects against some cancers.
- Making alcohol less accessible, would make it easier to avoid and/or drink less alcohol.
- Tighter government regulation on pricing, promotion and availability of alcohol would help reduce access and demand for alcohol in our neighbourhoods and help reduce cancer risk.



Advice if you drink

Alcohol causes significant harm to people and communities. It is best not to drink alcohol to protect against some cancers.

If you do choose to drink keep within the [NZ alcohol guidelines](#).

For help with your drinking see [HERE](#).

For more information about the effects of alcohol on your body see [HERE](#).



Help and support for you and your whānau

- Learn more about alcohol and cancer risk at [World Cancer Research Fund](#).
- Get motivated to lower your use of alcohol by using a Mhealth phone app at [Health Navigator NZ](#) app library.
- To get help with your drinking phone [Alcohol Drug Helpline](#) .
- For ways to reduce alcohol in your community see
 - [Wellplace.co.nz](#) to develop a healthy workplace drinking culture.
 - [Alcohol Healthwatch](#)
 - Cancer Council Australia, [Drink Less, Live More Campaign](#)

How can alcohol be made less accessible?

Alcohol products* are cheap, widely marketed and very accessible in our neighbourhoods. To help reduce alcohol-related cancer risk in Aotearoa, the Cancer Society would like the government to tighten regulation on the availability, affordability and promotion of all alcohol products by:

- Increasing the price of alcohol by having higher alcohol taxes
- Stricter marketing and promotion of alcohol products, including social media
- Stopping alcohol product sponsorship at public events such as sport and cultural events.
- Limiting the density of alcohol outlets and trading hours in our neighbourhoods.

**Alcohol products refer to all products produced by the alcohol industry such as alcohol free beer and wine and other drinks such as Kava commonly used in the Pacific Islands. The availability and promotion of these products increases exposure and promotion of alcohol use.*