

Alcohol. Get the facts.

Excessive alcohol consumption can affect your health and impact people around you.

Many Australians enjoy having a drink, but not a lot of people realise how alcohol can affect their physical, social and mental health. When enjoyed in moderation, alcohol can form part of a healthy lifestyle that includes good diet and exercise.

It is important to drink moderately.

Here are some tips:

- Set limits and stick to them.
- Alternate between alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks.
- Be mindful of how often you reach for your drink.
- Have something to eat before or while drinking.
- Try drinks with a lower alcohol content.
- Avoid shouts or rounds that pressure you to drink at someone else's pace.
- Be mindful of other people topping up your drinks.

Think you need some help?

Questions to ask yourself:

- Can you control when you start or stop drinking?
- Do you have trouble controlling how much you drink?
- Have you been unable to meet family, personal or work commitments because of your drinking?
- Have you often felt guilty or remorseful after drinking?
- Has a relative, friend, doctor or other health care professional been concerned about your drinking or suggested that you cut down?

Visit [DrinkWise.org.au](https://www.drinkwise.org.au) for more information about support services.

Standard drinks.

In Australia, a standard drink refers to 10 grams of alcohol, but it's worth remembering that the amount of alcohol varies across different drinks.

The alcohol volume is stated on the label of packaged drinks. It's hard to judge in non-packaged drinks – the Standard Drinks Calculator on the DrinkWise website can help estimate this.



How alcohol affects your driving.

Australia has strict laws about drinking alcohol and driving, with the legal limit set at .05 blood alcohol concentration (BAC) for full licence holders. Learners and probationary licence holders must have a .00 BAC. Other licence types may vary.

The effects of alcohol on driving can include:

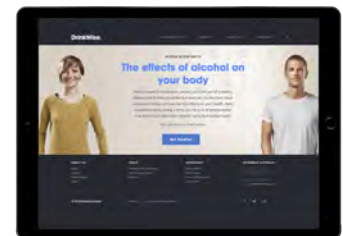
- reduced ability to judge speed and distance
- false sense of confidence and increased tendency to take risks
- reduced coordination and concentration
- slower reaction times
- impaired vision and impaired perception of obstacles.

Excessive drinking may also mean that you still have alcohol in your system the next day.

If you are going to drink, the safest option is to arrange alternative transport or accommodation ahead of time. Stay at a friend's place, use public transport or a ride-sharing service, or choose a designated driver to ensure you get home safely. There is no such thing as 'safe drink-driving'.



Find these tools and more info at [DrinkWise.org.au](https://www.drinkwise.org.au)



Body Health Tool

The interactive DrinkWise Body Health Tool provides information on the effects of alcohol on the body.



Standard Drinks Calculator

The DrinkWise Standard Drinks Calculator provides standard drink and calorie information across a range of beverages.

The facts.

Some effects of alcohol on your body.



YOUR BRAIN: Alcohol slows down the central nervous system which, in turn, impacts almost all of the body's cells and systems. Alcohol misuse may cause alcohol-related brain impairment or brain injury.

YOUR SKIN: Alcohol dehydrates your body including skin – our largest organ. Over time, drinking heavily can have other, more permanent effects on your skin.

YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM: Alcohol can suppress the immune system, particularly in long-term or excessive drinkers, making you susceptible to illness.

YOUR HEART: Long-term and excessive drinking can increase your risk of developing heart disease, high blood pressure, weakening of the heart muscle and heart failure.

YOUR BREASTS: Breast cancer is the most prevalent cancer among women. Studies indicate a relationship between alcohol consumption and the risk of developing breast cancer. Of course, drinking alcohol does not mean you will automatically get breast cancer, but it does mean your risk of developing it will be increased. How much you drink over your lifetime is what increases the risk, therefore, you should stick to the Australian Government's national drinking guidelines.

YOUR LIVER: Regularly drinking to excess may result in a fatty liver which can affect this organ's important function. Continued excessive drinking may result in the liver becoming inflamed, causing alcoholic hepatitis or permanent liver scarring (cirrhosis) and subsequent liver cancer.

YOUR PANCREAS: Continuous and excessive drinking can lead to pancreatitis. This can lead to permanent pancreatic damage and increases the risk of pancreatic cancer.

YOUR STOMACH: Alcohol may irritate the stomach lining which can bring on nausea, vomiting and sometimes diarrhoea. Long-term, excessive drinking has been associated with increased risk of upper gastrointestinal cancer including stomach cancer.

MALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM: Drinking alcohol can decrease sex drive and performance. Alcohol can also reduce the amount of testosterone in the blood with heavy consumption of alcohol increasing the risk of male fertility problems.

FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM/PREGNANCY: Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol can affect a woman's menstrual cycle and ovulation. This may make it difficult to conceive a healthy baby. Women who are planning a pregnancy, pregnant and/or breastfeeding should abstain from drinking alcohol.

Prenatal alcohol exposure can cause Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). This is a term used to describe a range of conditions that result from brain damage caused by alcohol exposure before birth. Other effects of alcohol exposure during pregnancy can include miscarriage, stillbirth, premature birth and low birth weight.

YOUR BOWEL: Alcohol may cause bowel irritation and may trigger symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome. Excessive drinking can increase the risk of colon cancer.

YOUR KIDNEYS: Alcohol has a diuretic effect which means it tends to make you pass more urine. Drinking to excess can cause a substantial increase in urine flow and lead to excessive losses of body fluid and marked dehydration.