

#酒為下著
#AlcoholFails



Centre for Health Protection



Department of Health

DRINK or NOT DRINK? Be Informed if you Drink!





You probably know something about alcohol from what you have seen, heard or experienced, but how much of it is myth and how much is truth? Check out the impact of alcohol on your health from this booklet. You can then make an informed choice about drinking.

Immediate Effects of Drinking



The speed at which you drink and the amount of food in your stomach while drinking affect the rate of alcohol absorption in the body.



For some people, even a single drink can lead to a blood alcohol level exceeding the legal limit allowed for drivers in Hong Kong.



Your liver breaks down most of the alcohol. A healthy liver breaks down less than one alcohol unit per hour (around one can of beer). If liver is damaged such as in cirrhosis, it takes a lot longer.

Drinking a large quantity of alcohol can overwhelm liver's ability to remove alcohol from the bloodstream. This leads to rapid increases in blood alcohol level and significantly impairs brain function, putting you in embarrassing situations that you wouldn't want others to know, or even endangers life.



➤ Rapidly consuming 4 drinks can render drinkers confused, drowsy and vomiting.



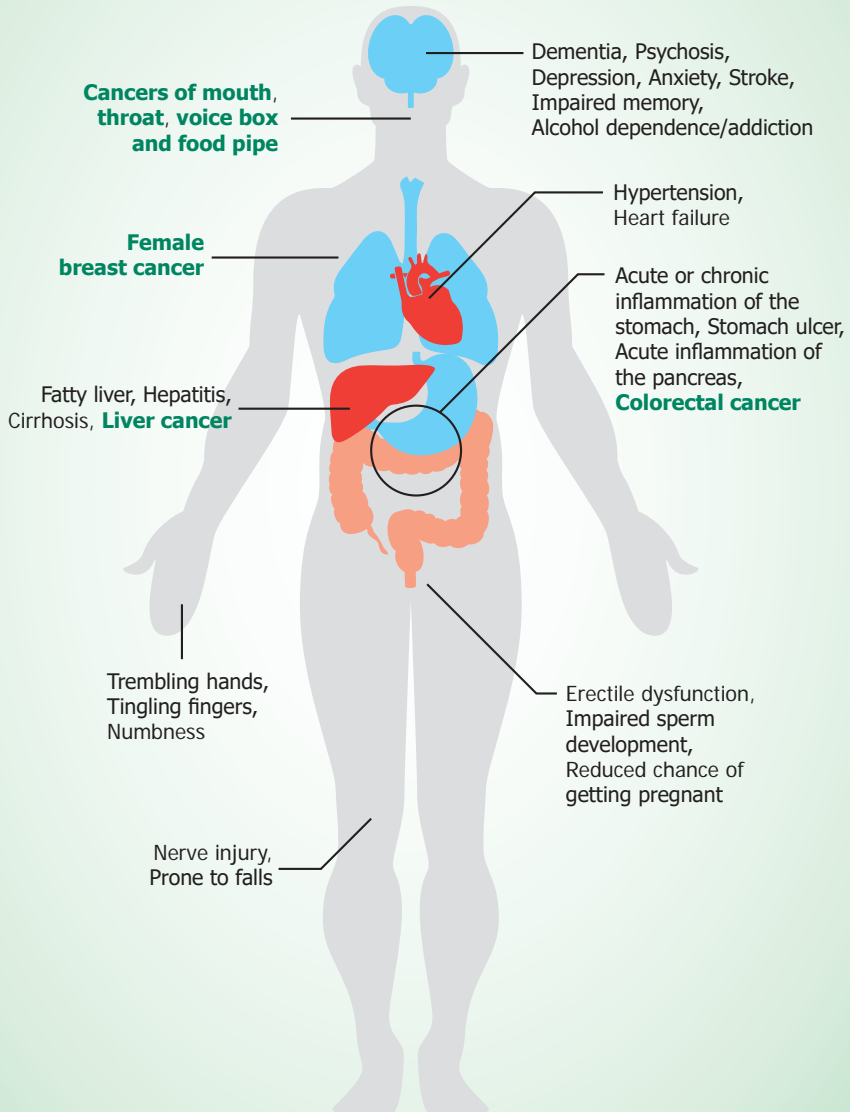
➤ A lethal blood alcohol level can result from a rapid consumption of more than 8 drinks for a 52 kg person.



Alcohol is also a strong agent of disinhibition. It puts people at risk of accidents, self-harm, domestic violence, child neglect and abuse, absence from classes and work, and unsafe sex resulting in unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.

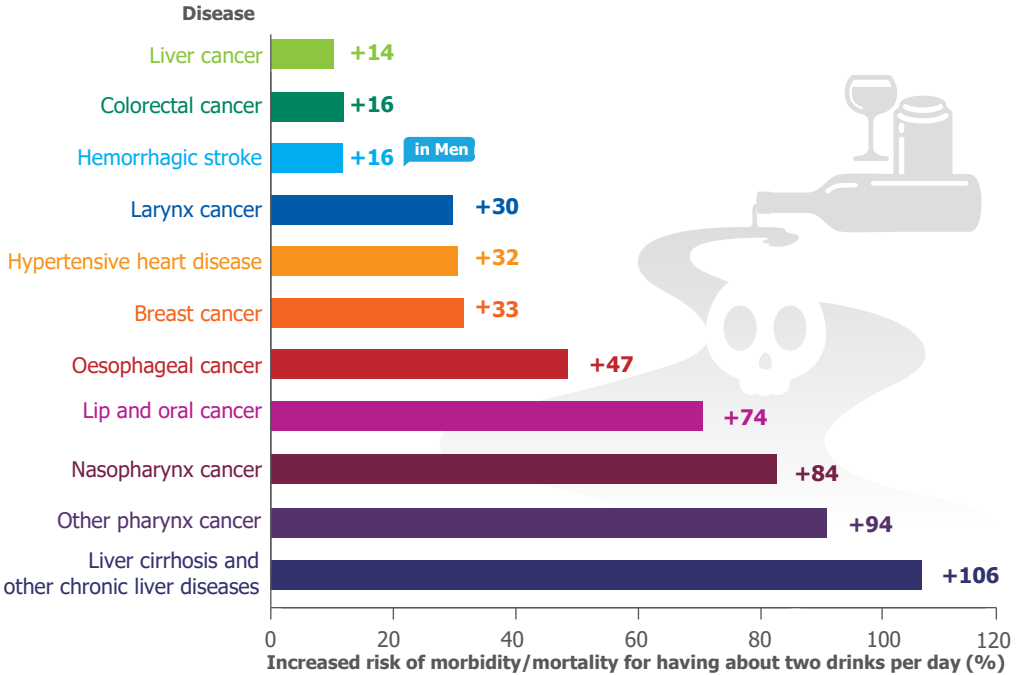
Your Health or Your Drink?

Harms you may risk if you choose to drink.



Alcohol is a proven cancer-causing agent, belonging to the same group as tobacco smoke, asbestos and ionizing radiation.

You might be told that having one or two drinks a day is good for your heart. The diagram below shows what alcohol actually brings to your health.

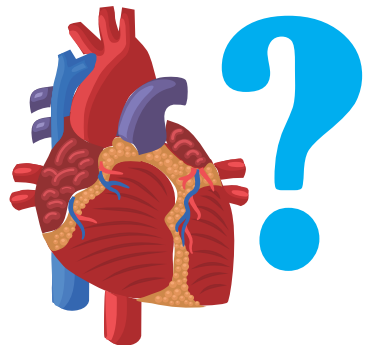


Source: Lancet 2017; 390:1345-422

The heavier, more frequent and longer you drink, the greater risk to your health.

It is **NOT** worth risking your health for a claimed but uncertain heart protective effect of alcohol:

- For the same amount of alcohol that is claimed to protect your heart, it increases your risk of other chronic diseases e.g. liver cirrhosis and certain cancers. Many other options such as healthy eating, active living and not smoking can benefit your heart directly and protect you from many other diseases;
- Of note, the protective effects of alcohol on the heart observed in individual studies in the West do not extend to all populations. Research on Hong Kong older Chinese adults has not shown any benefit of drinking to heart health. On the contrary, local evidence shows that drinking can increase the risk of death from ischaemic heart disease among the elderly.



People and Situations to Avoid Drinking



Women who are pregnant or planning to get pregnant



Children and adolescents



Feeling unwell, depressed or tired



About to do anything that is risky or requires skill, such as operating machinery or a vehicle



Previous history of alcohol or drug dependence



Previous or current serious mental illness



Before, after or during exercise



Coexisting health problems (such as gout, liver disease, heart disease and hypertension)



On medication

Talk to your doctor if you are not sure or have doubt.

Dispel the Myth

Alcohol has no effect on me as I seldom get drunk



Whether you get drunk or not, your liver works to break down most of the alcohol absorbed. But the process of breaking alcohol down generates harmful by-products which in turn cause damage to your liver and other organs. Symptoms of organ damage are not obvious in the early stages.



Alcohol flush reactions mean better tolerance to alcohol



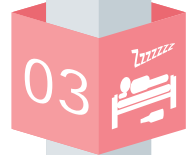
Many Asians have alcohol flush due to deficiency of an enzyme which helps to break down harmful by-products of alcohol. The flush is simply a sign of harmful by-products building up in your body and nothing else.



Drinking can help me sleep



Although alcohol may make you sleepy, the sleep induced is of shorter duration and poorer quality. Moreover, study suggests that tolerance to alcohol's sedative effects develops rapidly. As tolerance increases, so does your alcohol intake.



Drinking can lift up my mood and relieve stress



Alcohol is a strong depressant of the central nervous system. When you first start to drink, you may feel more relaxed, but in the long run alcohol can contribute to feelings of depression and anxiety and make stress harder to deal with. This is because regular, heavy drinking interferes with chemicals in your brain and they are necessary for good mental health and functioning.



Tea can lessen the effects of alcohol



While fluids rehydrate the body and lower the blood alcohol concentration, the absorbed alcohol still needs to be dealt with by your liver.



It's okay for children or young people to try a sip once in a while



As the brain does not stop developing until the early 20s, drinking alcohol at an early age may interfere with healthy brain development and functioning. Studies have shown that children who were allowed to drink were at increased risk of having drinking problems when they grow up. You would not want to subject your loved ones to the harmful effects of alcohol without a good reason!



Occasional binge drinking isn't harmful



Even occasionally, drinking excessive amounts can be dangerous. Binge drinking even on one occasion can result in misbehaviours, imposing harms to self and others. Side effects such as acute alcohol poisoning and acute inflammation of the pancreas may cost your life. Even though apparent physical harms may not show up at once, binge drinking has already caused damage to various organs of your body.



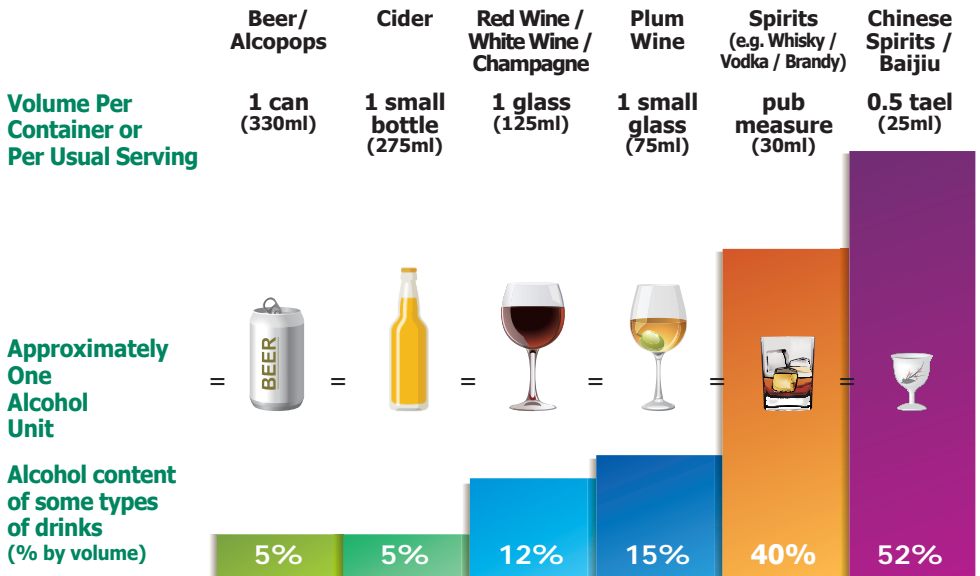
Watch your Drinking Habit

Some people may drink at levels which potentially cause, or are already causing, harm to themselves or others, without knowing it. It is therefore important to keep track of one's drinking behaviour.

If you drink a variety of alcoholic beverages, you can add up the number of alcohol units consumed in the day or during a drinking

episode. An 'alcohol unit' contains 10g of alcohol and is a common measure of alcohol content to help you watch the amount of drinking.

Here are some common alcoholic drinks which contain approximately one unit of alcohol.



If you wish to be more exact about the alcohol units contained in different drinks and to assess your drinking risk, you can use the e-alcohol screening and brief intervention (**e-SBI**) tool [<https://change4health.gov.hk/en/audit>]. Your family doctor or relevant professionals can help you.

Remember this, if you are healthy and you must drink, limit to 2 alcohol units for men and 1 unit for women on any drinking day. It is always good to cut down step by step and ultimately stop drinking for better health and reduced risk of cancer.



Ready to Drink Less for Yourself and Others?

Keep track of how much you drink

- Know the alcohol content (% vol or alcohol by volume, ABV) of the drinks
- Choose drinks with lower alcohol content



Beware of social pressure but stick to your choice

- Avoid going to pubs and places where people drink
- Tell your family and friends you are cutting down
- Script and practice your "No"



Set a limit for yourself

- Work out a personal limit per day, per week or per occasion and stick to it, and adjust the limit to a lower level gradually
- Limit to 2 alcohol units for men and 1 for women a day

Seek professional help when you

- Have to rely on alcohol to sleep or manage moods
- Have health or social problems related to alcohol
- Drink compulsively or are increasingly dependent on alcohol



Be smart how you drink

- Eat before and while you drink
- When you drink, do it slowly in sips
- Avoid "bottoms up" when toasting
- Avoid rounds, top-ups and re-fills
- Alternate alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks (e.g. soda water with orange juice, or tonic water and lime).



If you do **not drink** at all, do **not start** drinking with the intent of improving health.



**Use the e-alcohol screening and brief intervention (e-SBI) tool
and see what alcohol is causing to your health and life.**

Getting Help

Staying clear and sober may take some effort. Talk to your family doctor. Below are some medical professionals or community resources for stopping drinking. Contact your nearest service provider for details.

1. Hospital Authority's Psychiatry Specialist Out-patient Clinics (SOPCs)

Doctor may refer drinkers with mental health needs to Hospital Authority's Psychiatry SOPCs for assessment and treatment as appropriate. These SOPCs only accept medical practitioners' referrals.

2. Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Integrated Centre for Addiction Prevention and Treatment (ICAPT)

ICAPT provides one stop integrated treatment services for multi-addiction problems that include alcohol, drug, gambling addiction, internet addiction, sex addiction, overspending, etc. Services include counselling and psychotherapy, health consultation, psychiatric assessment and treatment, treatment group and residential programs.

Telephone: 2827 1000

Website: <http://icapt.tungwahcsd.org>

Address : 15/F, Tung Chiu Commercial Centre,
193 Lockhart Road,
Wan Chai, Hong Kong

3. Tung Wah Group of Hospitals "Stay Sober Stay Free" Alcohol Abuse Prevention and Treatment Service

This service includes comprehensive assessment, treatment and counselling for alcohol-related problems, and referral to in-patient treatment.

Enquiry Hotline: 2884 9876

Website: <http://atp.tungwahcsd.org>

Email: cc-atp@tungwah.org.hk

Details of various service districts

Eastern and Wanchai Office

Address: 9/F, T.W.G.Hs. Fong Shu Chuen Social Services Building, 6 Po Man Street, Shau Kei Wan, HK

Serene House

Address: 1/F, Serene House (Block C), Castle Peak Hospital, 13 Tsing Chung Koon Road, Tuen Mun, N.T.

Central Western, Southern and Islands Office

Address: 15/F, Tung Ning Building, 2 Hillier Street, Sheung Wan, HK

Butterfly Bay Office

Address: 4/F, Butterfly Bay Community Centre, Butterfly Estate, Tuen Mun, N.T.

4. Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) Hong Kong

Service Hours: Meetings are held every day from morning until evening. A detailed timetable is available on their website.

Telephone & Whatsapp: 9073 6922 (English) / 6110 6405 (Chinese)

Website: <https://aa-hk.org>

Note: The list and details of services may change without prior notification. Please check with the service providers for latest service arrangement. The information is for the convenience of the people in need. It is not to be regarded as an endorsement or guarantee of these organisations and their services.