

# Alcohol Use and Your Health

Accessible version: <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/alcohol-use.htm>

Drinking too much can harm your health. Excessive alcohol use leads to more than 95,000 deaths in the United States each year, shortening the lives of those who died by an average of 29 years. The economic costs of excessive alcohol consumption in 2010 were estimated at \$249 billion, or \$2.05 a drink.

## What is considered a “drink”?

### U.S. Standard Drink Sizes



12 ounces  
5% beer



8 ounces  
7% malt liquor



5 ounces  
12% wine



(examples: gin, rum,  
vodka, whiskey)

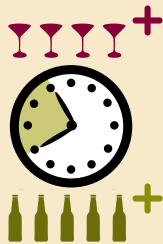
1.5 ounces  
40% (80 proof)  
distilled spirits

## Excessive alcohol use includes:



### Binge Drinking

For women, 4 or more drinks  
consumed on an occasion



For men, 5 or more drinks  
consumed on an occasion



### Heavy Drinking

For women, 8 or more drinks  
per week



For men, 15 or more drinks  
per week



### Any alcohol used by pregnant women



### Any alcohol used by those under the age of 21 years



## If you choose to drink, do so in moderation:

**FOR WOMEN**, up  
to 1 drink a day

**FOR MEN**, up to  
2 drinks a day



**DON'T DRINK AT ALL** if you are  
under the age of 21, or if you are or  
may be pregnant, or have health  
problems that could be made worse  
by drinking.



**NO ONE** should begin drinking  
or drink more frequently based  
on potential health benefits.



U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention

Excessive alcohol use has immediate effects that increase the risk of many harmful health conditions. These are most often the result of binge drinking. Over time, excessive alcohol use can lead to the development of chronic diseases and other serious problems.

## Short-Term Health Risks

### Injuries

- Motor vehicle crashes
- Falls
- Drownings
- Burns

### Violence

- Homicide
- Suicide
- Sexual assault
- Intimate partner violence

### Alcohol poisoning

### Reproductive health

- Risky sexual behaviors
- Unintended pregnancy
- Sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV
- Miscarriage
- Stillbirth
- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs)



## Long-Term Health Risks

### Chronic diseases

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Liver disease
- Digestive problems

### Cancers

- Breast
- Mouth and throat
- Liver
- Colon and rectum

### Learning and memory problems

- Dementia
- Poor school performance

### Mental health

- Depression
- Anxiety

### Social problems

- Lost productivity
- Family problems
- Unemployment

### Alcohol use disorders

[www.cdc.gov/alcohol](http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol)