



MEMBER UPDATE

ReFresh

February 9, 2022



This week...

Preventing Cancer – Dry February

The COVID-19 pandemic has been impacting our lives for more than two years; it has challenged many of us, requiring that we stay physically distant from the people we care about the most. Some may view a glass of beer or wine as a way to ease our nerves, and no one is alone in that feeling. The evidence is clear – we in BC have all been drinking significantly more than before the pandemic.

British Columbians drank more during the first year of the pandemic than they did in the past two decades. Between April 1, 2020, and March 31, 2021, residents of the province drank 9.32 litres of pure alcohol **per capita**, the equivalent of **547 cans of five per cent beer per person** over the age of 14.

Evidence indicates that the higher the alcohol consumption—particularly for those who drink frequently— the higher a person’s risk of developing an alcohol-associated cancer.

Even those who have no more than one drink per day, and binge drinkers (women consuming 4 or more drinks and men consuming 5 or more drinks in one sitting) have a modestly increased risk of some cancers.

All alcoholic drinks, including red and white wine, beer, and liquor, are linked with cancer. The more you drink, the higher your cancer risk.

Drinking alcohol raises your risk of getting six kinds of cancer—

- Mouth and throat
- Voice box (larynx)
- Esophagus
- Colon and rectum
- Liver
- Breast (in women)

Evidence is also accumulating that alcohol consumption is associated with increased risks of melanoma (skin), prostate, and pancreatic cancers.

One drink is about:

- 142 mL (5 oz) of wine – 12% alcohol content
- 43 mL (1.5 oz) of spirits – 40% alcohol content
- 341 mL (12 oz) of beer or cider – 5% alcohol content

Why Does Alcohol Use Raise Cancer Risk?

When you drink alcohol, your body breaks it down into a chemical called acetaldehyde. Acetaldehyde is a toxic chemical and a probable human [carcinogen](#). It damages your DNA and prevents your body from correctly repairing the damage. DNA is the cell's 'instruction manual' that manages a cell's normal growth and function. When DNA is damaged, a cell can begin growing out of control, creating a cancerous tumor.

Drinking alcohol also impairs the body's ability to break down and absorb a variety of nutrients that may be associated with cancer risk, including: [vitamin A](#), nutrients in the [vitamin B complex](#), [vitamin C](#), [vitamin D](#), [vitamin E](#), and [carotenoids](#). Another notable risk for women is that alcohol increases blood levels of [estrogen](#), a sex hormone linked to the risk of breast cancer.

Drinking about 3.5 drinks a day doubles or even triples your risk of developing cancer of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, and esophagus; and 1 ½ times the risk of developing colorectal cancer, and, for women, breast cancer.

Did you know that ***14% of all LTD cases for BCPVPA Members are due to some form of cancer?*** Cancer is the second highest occurring diagnosis in our LTD Plan after mental disorders.

Dry February

You may have seen the ads on TV about **Dry Feb.**

Dry Feb is a fundraiser that challenges you to go alcohol-free this month and to raise funds for the [Canadian Cancer Society](#).

Even though it is already February 9th you can still participate. Participating can help you get healthy and clear your head while raising funds for an important cause. Giving up alcohol for a month is a small sacrifice to help people, ***including your own colleagues***, affected by cancer – the good news is that it will benefit you too!

It isn't too late to go 'dry' the rest of the month. To learn more, check out dryfeb.ca.

Remember...

An occasional drink is fine, but it comes down to this: **the less alcohol you drink, the lower your risk for cancer.**

Fortunately (or unfortunately, for those of us who enjoy beverages now and again), it is that simple.

Sources

Canadian Cancer Society | [Some Sobering Facts About Alcohol and Cancer Risk](#)

CDC | [Alcohol and Cancer](#)

National Cancer Institute | [Alcohol and Cancer Risk](#)

