

Alcohol and Health Guidelines

On January 17, 2023 the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) published new [Alcohol and Health Guidelines](#). These guidelines represent a significant shift from the previous Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines (LRDGs) published by CCSA 2011. Since that time, there has been new research providing better estimates of the links between alcohol use and specific diseases and there is now strong evidence that consuming more than 2 standard drinks per week is associated with increased risk of adverse health effects.

The Impact of Alcohol

Alcohol is a leading cause of preventable deaths, harms and disability, globally and in Canada. Alcohol has been recognized by the International Agency for Research on Cancer as a [type 1 carcinogen](#), associated with at least seven types of cancer. Furthermore, alcohol consumption increases the risk of cardiovascular disease, liver disease, and injury. Alcohol also has adverse effects on non-users including intimate partner and other types of violence, as well as motor vehicle collisions due to impaired driving.

The Canadian Centre on Substance Use estimates that in 2019 in the VCH region, 288 deaths and 2950 overnight hospitalizations were wholly or partly attributable to alcohol-related health issues. Alcohol consumption in the VCH region has been increasing since this time.

Key Points from the guidance:

There is a continuum of risk associated with levels of weekly alcohol consumption.

- **0 drinks per week** – Benefits of not drinking include better health and sleep
- **1-2 standard drinks per week** – Likely to avoid adverse health impacts
- **3-6 standard drinks per week** – Risk of developing cancer, including breast and colon cancer increase
- **7 or more standard drinks per week** – The risk of heart disease, stroke increases significantly at this level, with radical increase for every drink above 7 per week
- **When pregnant** – There is no known safe amount of alcohol use
- **If breastfeeding** – Not drinking alcohol is safest
- **More than 2 standard drinks per drinking occasion** – Increases risk of injury to self and others

CCSA modeling based on high quality systematic reviews estimated that 2 standard drinks per week is associated with a 1 in 1000 chance of premature death and that 6 standard drinks per week is associated with a 1 in 100 chance of premature death.

You can reach a Medical Health Officer at 604.675.3900 | Toll free at 1.855.675.3900
For public health emergencies after hours, contact the Medical Health Officer on call at 604.527.4893

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To receive these updates by email please contact us at VCHPhysiciansUpdate@vch.ca

Alcohol and Health Guidelines (cont.)

Recommendations for Patient Care:

Patients should be aware of the significant change in guidelines. Advise patients:

- Less alcohol is always better for one's health.
- If patients are consuming more than 2 standard drinks per week, or more than 2 standard drinks per drinking occasion, advise them to consider decreasing consumption.
- The risk of alcohol-related adverse effects increases proportionately to the number of drinks
- Inform on the health benefits of not drinking (better sleep, mental health)
- Provide patients with CCSA's [patient-friendly infographic](#)

Local Mpox Outbreak Over

Mpox cases have been declining in BC since the height of the mpox outbreak in July 2022. The majority of cases in BC were seen in the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority. The last case of mpox in BC occurred in November 2022 and virus is no longer deemed to be circulating locally. Although the rate of new mpox cases is declining globally, mpox virus is still present and continues to circulate in other jurisdictions.

Imvamune vaccine thus remains available for at risk eligible individuals who wish to start or complete their vaccine series. Two doses are recommended for maximum protection.

Information on pharmacies and clinics offering mpox vaccine is available at this site:

<http://www.vch.ca/Pages/Monkeypox.aspx>

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