

Did you know? Drinking alcohol causes cancer

Alcohol is responsible for hundreds of cancer cases in Aotearoa New Zealand every year.

Most of us know that smoking, asbestos, and sun damage can cause cancer, but it's less well known that drinking alcohol can too. Alcohol causes cancer by damaging our DNA.

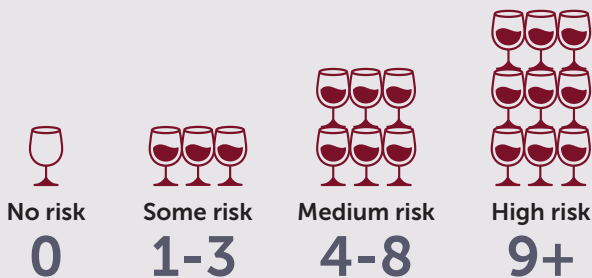
Drinking alcohol doesn't mean that you'll definitely get cancer, but the **risk is higher the more alcohol we drink.**

How we drink affects the risk

- The **amount we drink** is the most important.
- **All types** of alcoholic drinks cause cancer including wine.
- Even **light drinking** (1–3 standard drinks a week) puts us at risk.
- **Smoking and drinking** at the same time increases the risk of mouth and throat cancer.
- **Reducing** our drinking lowers the risk.

Drinks per week and cancer risk

(A standard drink contains 10 grams of alcohol)



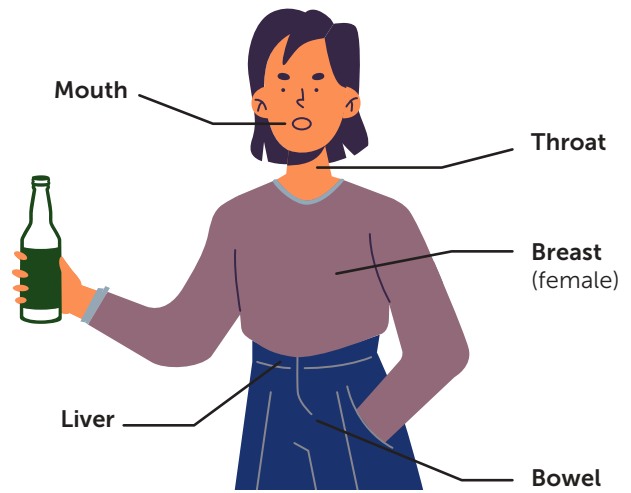
Who we are affects the risk

- For **women** (and people with breasts), drinking alcohol can cause breast cancer.
- **Pākehā** have the highest rate of alcohol-caused bowel cancer.
- People of **East Asian** descent may have genes that make mouth and throat cancer 5x more likely with drinking. If you flush red when you drink, it's a warning sign.
- **Māori and Pacific peoples** are more at risk from alcohol-caused cancers – especially liver cancer – for many reasons, including inequity in healthcare.

Where are the warnings?

- Alcoholic drinks don't have to have labels about cancer risk in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- The World Health Organization says **government and health authorities should warn us** about the cancer risk and make alcohol less accessible.

Cancer? Where?



Drinking alcohol also makes cancer more likely to spread and harder to treat.

- 0** Number of drinks a week to avoid cancer.
- 1** Drink per week increases risk of **breast cancer**.
- 1** Drink per week increases risk of **bowel cancer**.
- 3x** The amount your risk of **mouth and throat cancer** goes up when you **drink 5 standard drinks a day**.
- 5x** Your risk of **mouth and throat cancer** if you get **alcohol flush**.

For more information:

[royalsociety.org.nz/
alcoholcausescancer](https://royalsociety.org.nz/alcoholcausescancer)

