

Responsible drinking

Helping people make informed choices about alcohol.



Women and Alcohol

Women's bodies react to alcohol differently than men's do.

The majority of the risks and benefits of alcohol consumption relate to women and men alike. However, on average, most women respond to alcohol faster than men because their bodies react to alcohol differently. Also, excessive drinking may be more risky for women than for men; one example is an increased risk to their personal safety.

Body composition

A woman's body is different than a man's. The following factors may contribute to gender-related differences in how much alcohol reaches the bloodstream, known as Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC).

- The average female body has 10% more fat cells than the average male body. Body fat contains little water and alcohol is absorbed by water in the body's tissues before it reaches the bloodstream
- Women produce less of a certain enzyme that breaks down alcohol in the stomach
- Because of their smaller size, women have less blood to dilute the alcohol once it reaches the bloodstream

It is impossible to predict exactly how any individual will respond to alcohol because every person's situation is unique (e.g., height, weight, amount and timing of food intake, genetics, medications, health status).

However, as a woman, you may be exposed to greater health risks if you drink as much as a man. That is why government guidelines generally recommend lower 'moderate drinking' levels for women than for men. Women should never try to match a man drink for drink.

Pregnancy

Pregnant women should either not drink alcohol or seek medical advice before doing so. There is currently no consensus on how much alcohol is safe for a pregnant woman to consume before causing risk to the foetus.

Breastfeeding

Women who are breastfeeding should be cautious about drinking alcohol, if they drink alcohol at all. According to the United States Dietary Guidelines (2010), if the infant's breastfeeding behaviour is well established and the child is at least three months of age, a mother may consume a single alcohol beverage if she waits at least four hours before breastfeeding. An alternative is to express breast milk before consuming the drink and feed the expressed milk to the infant later.

Breast cancer

There are many risk factors for breast cancer. They include family history, body mass index, height, age at menarche, age at first pregnancy, breastfeeding, age at menopause, whether or not a woman has taken hormone replacement therapy, smoking and alcohol consumption. Some organisations such as the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) have concluded that alcohol consumption is a cause of breast cancer, with the risk increasing with the amount consumed.

Although alcohol is a well-established risk factor for breast cancer, the mechanism by which alcohol consumption may cause breast cancer is not fully known. The relationship between alcohol consumption and breast cancer is undergoing vigorous research. Recent studies indicate that alcohol consumption may be more strongly linked to a certain less common form of breast cancer (lobular cancer), than it is to the most common type of breast cancer (ductal cancer).

Both alcohol and hormone replacement therapy are risk factors for a certain subtype (lobular) of breast cancer. It has been reported that women who have been on hormone replacement therapy for more than five years and consume alcohol may have an increased risk of breast cancer if and how these two factors may interact and affect risk is not completely known.

www.aboutalcohol.com

These sites contain further information that you may find useful.

Other websites

www.alcoholinfo.nl
www.jellinek.nl
www.trimbos.nl
www.drinkaware.co.uk
www.aa-nederland.nl
www.tactus.nl

www.alcoholondercontrole.nl
www.spreekbeurten.info/alcohol
www.alcoholenik.nl
www.stichting-be-aware.nl
www.verslaving.nl
www.laetzenietverzuipen.nl



For people above legal drinking age only



Don't drink and drive



Don't drink while pregnant

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