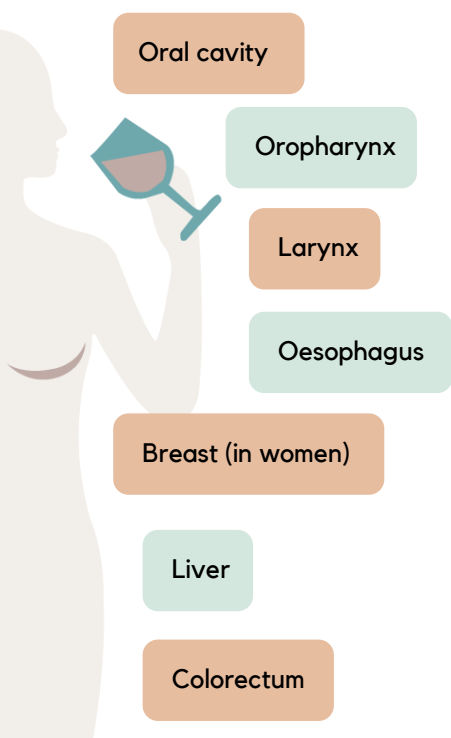


# 5

## FACTS ABOUT ALCOHOL & CANCER

This information sheet provides some facts about the links between alcohol consumption and a range of cancer types. This affects not only people who drink alcohol but also their families, friends and communities.



### 1. Alcohol causes at least 7 types of cancer

One of the ways that alcohol (as ethanol) can cause cancer is through DNA damage.

Alcohol consumption is known to increase the risk of cancer development in

- oral cavity (mouth)
- oropharynx (throat)
- oesophagus (gullet)
- liver
- larynx (voice box)
- colorectum (large intestine and rectum)
- female breast



### 2. The most common types of cancer due to alcohol are different for men and women

In 2018 in the WHO European Region the most common sites of cancers due to alcohol consumption were **female breast (most common cancer site in women)** and **colorectum (most common cancer site in men)**.

More than **110 000** cases of cancer in men

Almost **70 000** cases of cancer in women

and almost **92 000** cancer deaths were caused by drinking alcohol in the WHO European Region in 2018

In 2018 alcohol caused approximately



from breast cancer in women



from colorectal cancer

# 5 FACTS ABOUT ALCOHOL & CANCER



## 3. The risk of cancer from alcohol consumption increases from the first drink

**THERE IS NO SAFE LEVEL OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION FOR CANCER**

All types of alcoholic beverages, including beer, wine and spirits, can cause cancer. The risk starts at low levels and increases substantially the more alcohol is consumed.

More than **1 in 10** of all cancer cases causally linked to alcohol across the WHO European Region in 2018 were due to drinking no more than



1 big bottle  
of beer  
(500 ml)

or



2 glasses  
of wine  
(200 ml)

or



60 ml  
of  
spirits

**per day**

## 4. Using tobacco as well as alcohol multiplies cancer risks

People who use **both alcohol and tobacco** have a **5 times increased risk of developing cancers** of the oral cavity, oropharynx, larynx and oesophagus, compared with people who use either alcohol or tobacco alone.

For people with heavy drinking patterns, the risk is up to **30 times higher**



## 5. Cancers due to alcohol consumption are preventable



Reducing alcohol consumption will prevent cancers due to alcohol consumption.

### Regulations

- to make alcohol less affordable
  - to ban or restrict alcohol marketing across all types of media
  - to reduce alcohol availability
- can support the reduction of alcohol consumption and ultimately of cancers due to alcohol consumption.

WHO strongly supports regulations to place health warnings on alcoholic beverages so that the public can know about the risks of cancer from alcohol consumption. They can then make informed choices, such as reducing or stopping drinking alcohol.

**Together, we can achieve a SAFER WHO European Region free from harm due to alcohol**

For further information and references, **Alcohol and Cancer in the WHO European Region: an appeal for better prevention** (2020)

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