



# IT'S YOUR HEALTH

## Responsible Holiday Drinking

### The Issue

Toasting family and friends with a glass of wine or other alcoholic drink over the holidays is a tradition for many Canadians. But drinking or serving too much alcohol can lead to health issues and other problems.

- how quickly you drink
- your mood
- the amount you have eaten
- your past experiences with drinking

### Short-Term Effects of Too Much Alcohol

If you have too much to drink you may experience many short-term effects, including:

- drowsiness
- dizziness
- slurred speech
- loss of coordination skills
- inability to think and judge clearly
- inability to estimate distances and decreased reaction times

### Background

[Alcohol](#) is a drug; a depressant that slows down your body's central nervous system. Depending on how much you drink, alcohol can affect your concentration, speech, balance, vision, coordination and judgment.

The effects of alcohol depends on many factors:

- your gender
- your body size
- how much you usually drink



### Long-Term Effects of Too Much Alcohol

You may be drinking too much on a long-term basis if you notice any of the following:

- the need to drink more to feel the same 'high'
- more money is being spent on alcohol

- poor appetite, jumpiness, insomnia or sweating when not drinking
- blackouts when drinking or not remembering drinking
- bouts of confusion or memory loss



## The Health Risks of Too Much Alcohol

Long-term heavy drinking can cause many chronic health problems, including:

- liver damage
- heart disease
- stomach ulcers
- blood vessel disorders
- impotency in men
- menstrual irregularities in women
- some types of cancer

Recent studies have suggested that drinking even a moderate amount of alcohol when pregnant may damage the fetus, causing a range of health problems including [Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder](#). The bottom line is, the safest option during pregnancy, or when planning to become pregnant, is to not drink alcohol at all.

Of the estimated 3,000 deaths each year from motor vehicle crashes, approximately 40 per cent are attributed to alcohol. Heavy drinking can also lead to serious professional, family, financial and legal problems, any of which can affect your health.

## Minimizing Your Risk

- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink. Your risk of injury increases with each additional drink.
- Eat something before drinking, or drink with meals. It is important not to drink on an empty stomach.
- Try alternating alcoholic beverages with caffeine-free non-alcoholic drinks to limit the amount you drink in any three-hour period.
- Drink only if you want to. Don't feel pressured into accepting a drink.
- Don't drive. Take a taxi or public transportation, walk, or decide who will be the designated driver before the party starts.



As a host, you can protect yourself and your guests by following these tips:

- Limit how much you drink yourself, so you can keep control of things.
- Before the party, ask someone to help you if problems arise.
- Provide alcohol-free drinks like coffee, tea, pop, fruit punch and juice, along with alcoholic drinks.
- Mix and serve drinks yourself or appoint someone responsible as bartender. Guests tend to drink more when they serve themselves.
- Serve food, but avoid salty, sweet or greasy foods because they make people thirstier.



- Stop serving alcohol at least an hour before the party ends.
- Don't rely on coffee to sober guests up. It only makes them more alert, not sober.
- Encourage guests to name designated drivers, leave their cars at home, take taxis or public transport, or walk. Keep cash and taxi numbers ready.
- Be prepared for overnight guests by having blankets, sleeping bags and pillows on hand.
- Never serve alcohol to minors.

## Health Canada's Role

The Health Portfolio plays an important role in addressing alcohol-related harm. A number of initiatives are aimed at reducing alcohol misuse among Canadians, such as:

- a. the [National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program](#);
- b. the [Pan-Canadian Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder \(FASD\) Initiative](#); and,
- c. the [First Nations and Inuit FASD program](#), mental health and addictions research, including alcohol and research on the prevention, treatment and diagnosis of FASD.





Health  
Canada

Santé  
Canada

Your health and  
safety... our priority.

Votre santé et votre  
sécurité... notre priorité.

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Updated:

December 2010

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## Need More Info?

For more information on alcohol-related matters visit the following websites:

- [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, About Alcohol](http://www.camh.net/about_addiction_mental_health/drug_and_addiction_information/about_alcohol.html) at:  
[http://www.camh.net/about\\_addiction\\_mental\\_health/drug\\_and\\_addiction\\_information/about\\_alcohol.html](http://www.camh.net/about_addiction_mental_health/drug_and_addiction_information/about_alcohol.html)
- [Canadian Liver Foundation - Alcohol and the Liver](http://www.liver.ca/Liver_Health/Alcohol_and_the_Liver.aspx) at:  
[http://www.liver.ca/Liver\\_Health/Alcohol\\_and\\_the\\_Liver.aspx](http://www.liver.ca/Liver_Health/Alcohol_and_the_Liver.aspx)
- [Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, Alcohol](http://www.ccsa.ca/Eng/Topics/SubstancesAndAddictions/Alcohol/Pages/default.aspx) web section at:  
<http://www.ccsa.ca/Eng/Topics/SubstancesAndAddictions/Alcohol/Pages/default.aspx>
- [Public Health Agency of Canada, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder \(FASD\)](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fasd-etcaf/) at:  
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fasd-etcaf/>
- [Public Health Agency of Canada, Alcohol and Pregnancy](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-gs/know-savoir/alc-eng.php) at:  
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-gs/know-savoir/alc-eng.php>

For more information on holiday safety visit the following websites:

- *It's Your Health*, [Toy Safety](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/prod/toys-jouets-eng.php) -  
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/prod/toys-jouets-eng.php>
- *It's Your Health*, [Candle Safety](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/prod/candle-bougie-eng.php) -  
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/prod/candle-bougie-eng.php>

- *It's Your Health*, [Wood Smoke](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/envIRON/wood-bois-eng.php) -  
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/envIRON/wood-bois-eng.php>
- *It's Your Health*, [Holiday Safety](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/life-vie/hol-fefe-secur-eng.php) -  
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/life-vie/hol-fefe-secur-eng.php>
- Health Canada, [Holiday Safety](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/securIT/season-saison/holiday-fetes/index-eng.php) web section at: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/securIT/season-saison/holiday-fetes/index-eng.php>
- Health Canada, [Fun and Safe Holiday Season](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/holiday-securIT-fetes-eng.php) fact sheet at: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/holiday-securIT-fetes-eng.php>

For safety information about food, health and consumer products visit the [Safe Consumers](http://www.health.gc.ca/consumer) website at: [www.health.gc.ca/consumer](http://www.health.gc.ca/consumer)

For more articles on health and safety issues, go to the [It's Your Health](http://www.health.gc.ca/iyh) web section at: [www.health.gc.ca/iyh](http://www.health.gc.ca/iyh)

You can also call toll-free at 1-866-225-0709 or TTY at 1-800-267-1245\*