YOU DRINK AND WHILE YOU ARE DRINKING TOO, AND EAT BEFORE IF YOU DRINK, PACE YOUR DRINKS, BEST NOT TO DRIVE AT ALL. IF YOU DRINK AT ALL, IT IS WITH YOUR PHARMACIST TO BE SURE. DON'T MIX ALCOHOL WITH MEDICINES OR ILLEGAL DRUGS. CHECK PLAN AHEAD AND STAY SAFE!

Getting home.

Drinking and how they are drinking. How much your friends are drinking. Stays. Make sure you know plan ahead for overnight rides with adults, too.

In the car (this includes drunk before deciding to get a ride, make sure you know how much the driver has eaten before deciding to get a ride, make sure you know how much the driver has drunk before deciding to get in the car (this includes rides with adults, too).

For more information on addiction and mental health issues, or a copy of this resource, please contact CAMH’s Samuel McLaughlin Addiction and Mental Health Information Centre:

Ontario toll-free: 1 800 463-6273
Toronto: 416 979-6909

Tel: 1 800 661-1111 or 416 595-6059 in Toronto
E-mail: publications@camh.net

To make a donation, please contact:

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Tel: 416 979-6909
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If you have questions, compliments or concerns about services at CAMH, please call our Client Relations Co-ordinator at:

Tel: 416 535-8501 ext. 2028
Visit our website at: www.camh.net

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ISBN 0-88668-520-3
Illustrations by Craig Terlson
Disponible en français.

What is alcohol?

Alcohol is a drug that slows down parts of your brain. Drinking alcohol can make you feel more relaxed. It can also make it harder to think clearly, make good decisions and do various tasks.

Alcohol is made by fermenting (and sometimes distilling) fruits, vegetables or grains. Alcohol itself is a clear liquid. The colour in beer, spritzers, wine and other alcoholic drinks comes from other ingredients and from the process of fermentation.

Who uses alcohol?

Most Canadian adults drink alcohol, and do so responsibly. But because alcohol is a drug, there may be risks if you drink any amount of alcohol.

One in 10 students (10%) drink alcohol once a week.

One in four male students (25%) and one in five females (20%) reported binge drinking (five or more drinks at one time) in the past month.

More than half of the alcohol consumed in Canada is beer, the most popular alcoholic drink. Nectar is liquor (e.g., rum, vodka) by 26 per cent and wine at 21 per cent.

Canadians spend about $12.4 billion a year on alcohol.

About 10 per cent of Canadians are dependent on alcohol at some time in their lives.

For many adults and young people, alcohol can be a part of socializing, entertainment and relaxing. For others, alcohol is a problem. If you find that alcohol affects you negatively or causes you to get into dangerous situations, you may have a problem with alcohol.

For more information or help, contact one of the following organizations:

1. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Information Centre at 1 800 463-6273
2. Kids Help Phone at 1 800 668-6868
3. Ontario Drug and Alcohol Registry of Treatment at 1 800 565-8603 or www.dort.on.ca.

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Is alcohol addictive?
Yes, alcohol can be addictive. About one person in 20 who drinks is dependent on alcohol. People with an addiction may have difficulty stopping by themselves, even if they want to, and even if other negative effects (such as financial or other personal problems) begin to outweigh the positive effects. Alcohol dependence can also cause major problems with friends, family, school, work, emotional and mental health, the law and money.

How does alcohol make you feel?
Alcohol may slow your reflexes, movement and thinking. For a short time:
- more calm and relaxed
- more talkative
- less shy
- warm (skin may be flushed)
- less co-ordinated

Alcohol can make some people aggressive. For others, drinking can depress them or make them more depressed. When people are intoxicated (drunk), they may:
- have blackouts (lose their memory)
- slur their speech or have trouble walking
- feel sleepy or lose consciousness
- be more likely to have falls and other accidents
- get alcohol poisoning or die
- have slower reflexes and thinking
- have more risks and make bad decisions.

What is a standard drink?
Each of these drinks contains the same amount of alcohol (a “standard drink” or 13.6 grams of alcohol):

- A 1.5 oz/43 mL shot of liquor (sometimes known as spirits; e.g., rye, rum, whisky, vodka).
- A 0.6 oz/14.2 mL glass of table wine.
- A 12 oz/341 mL can or bottle of regular strength beer (e.g., sherry, port, vermouth).
- A 3 oz/85 mL glass of fortified wine.

Alcohol is found in different amounts in different kinds of drinks. For example:
- regular strength beer contains five per cent alcohol (some beers contain higher or lower percentages)
- table wine contains about 12 per cent alcohol
- fortified wine contains 16 to 18 per cent alcohol
- most liquor contains 40 per cent alcohol.

An average adult can eliminate from the body (mostly through urine) about two-thirds of one standard drink per hour (10 grams of alcohol). If that person has two standard drinks, it will take about three hours for him or her to be free of alcohol again if you get drunk, only time can make you sober again.

Can you feel bad when you stop drinking or cut back quickly?
Yes. People who often drink a lot for a period of time, or binges (five or more drinks on one occasion), may feel bad and even experience serious physical effects when they stop drinking or cut down. They may:
- feel nervous and jumpy
- have sleep problems
- have tremors (the “shakes”)
- have seizures
- have hallucinations (Think the rum or see things that aren’t really there).

These are called withdrawal symptoms.

How long do the effects last?
It depends. How quickly you get drunk, and how long it will take you to get sober, depend on:
- how much you drink
- how quickly you drink
- your sex
- how tired you are
- whether or not you have eaten before drinking
- what drugs are in your body
- your body type.

Remember: It’s the amount of alcohol you drink that affects you—not the type of drink. It doesn’t matter whether you drink beer, coolers, wine or liquor.

Is alcohol dangerous?
Yes, alcohol can be dangerous in a number of ways. Too much alcohol can cause a hangover (headache, feeling sick, shakiness and vomiting). Too much alcohol can also cause alcohol poisoning and even death.

Pregnancy
For pregnant women, there is no known safe level of drinking. A woman who drinks during pregnancy is more likely to have a miscarriage, to have the baby born too early, to have the baby born dead, or to have other problems.
A baby may be born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD). This means the baby may have physical abnormalities, behaviour problems and other difficulties. A woman who is pregnant, or planning to have a baby, should talk to her doctor about alcohol and other drugs.

Blackouts (lose their memory)
Slur their speech or have trouble walking

Are you a regular drinker? If yes, you may be at risk of alcohol-related problems. It is important to talk to your doctor about your drinking.

Breastfeeding
If a woman is breastfeeding, alcohol can be passed to her baby through the milk. If at least one person can make bad decisions.

Can you feel bad when you stop drinking or cut back quickly?

Is alcohol legal?
Yes, alcohol is a legal drug if you are of legal age. In Ontario you must be at least 19 years old to buy or drink alcohol. The legal drinking age is 19 years throughout Canada, except for Quebec, Manitoba and Alberta. These provinces allow drinking at age 18. In the United States, the drinking age is 21 years.

What are the dangers and the law?
The dangers and the law

Can alcohol be good for you?

Can mixing alcohol with other drugs be dangerous?

Alcohol and its effects
The dangers and the law

How much is too much alcohol consumption?

How much alcohol is too much?

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