

Use of Alcohol

Online version with active resource links at: <http://cancer-help.me/drymouth>

Drinking Alcohol and Cancer.

Most people know that heavy drinking can cause health and other alcohol-related problems. But people might not know that drinking alcohol also can raise their risk of developing cancer, worsen symptoms of cancer, or interact with cancer treatments to cause harmful side effects.

It's important for you to speak to your health care team about whether or not it is safe to drink alcohol during or immediately following your cancer treatment.

The evidence indicates that the more alcohol a person drinks—particularly the more alcohol a person drinks regularly over time—the higher their risk of developing an alcohol-associated cancer. Alcohol consumption may also be associated with an increased risk of second primary cancers.

What are the levels of alcohol use?

Alcohol can be an addictive substance. Not everyone who consumes alcohol will become addicted but continuing to use alcohol despite risks and consequences can be a sign of a problem. Moderate alcohol use is considered having 1 drink per day for women and 2 drinks per day for men. Heavy alcohol use is considered having more than 7 drinks per week for women (3+ drinks on any day) and more than 14 drinks per week for men (4+ drinks on any day).

Can I drink alcohol during treatment?

Your cancer care team administering your treatment will be able to give specific advice about whether drinking alcohol is safe with particular drugs and treatments.

Where can I get help with my alcohol use?

Alcohol is frequently used as a coping strategy during times of stress, like managing a cancer diagnosis and treatment.

However, there are a number of treatments available to support recovery from alcohol use disorder and/or to help you adopt and maintain healthy coping strategies and lifestyle behaviors. If you believe you need support, talk to your care team. Your doctors and nurses can help you to navigate options. A team social worker may be a particularly good resource for you.

To talk with someone at anytime:

SAMHSA –

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

- National Helpline – 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
- 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Free and confidential information in English and Spanish for individuals and family members facing substance abuse and mental health issues

Content adapted from websites below.

Resources for Additional Information:

- [Cancer.Net, Alcohol](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Alcohol Use and Cancer](#)
- [NIH, National Cancer Institute, Alcohol and Cancer Risk](#)
- [Center for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC, Alcohol and Cancer](#)

Recursos en Español:

- [NIH, Instituto Nacional Del Cáncer, Alcohol y el riesgo de cáncer](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Alcohol](#)
- [American Cancer Society, La relación entre el consumo de alcohol y el cáncer](#)