



Understanding Alcohol Consumption

2026

Alcohol is the most commonly used substance in the U.S. Learning about the effects of drinking can help you lower associated health risks.

1 Health risk

How alcohol use can affect you

Now

Can interfere with daily life (sleep, mood, weight) and increase the risk of immediate injury

Later

Can cause long-term health problems, including chronic diseases and cancer

Weekly drinking level and health risk

Weekly drinks	Health risk
0 drinks	No risk
1-2 drinks	Low risk
3-6 drinks	Moderate risk
7+ drinks	Increasingly high risk

Adopted from the [Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction](#)

A 'standard drink' is 12 oz beer/5 oz wine/1.5 oz spirits. Many served drinks (like a beer at a sporting event or concert) are much larger and count as multiple drinks.

2 Alcohol use and consequences



89,480

ER visits in MA involved alcohol (2024)



1 in 3

Traffic deaths in MA involved a drunk driver (2023)



1,674

Deaths in MA involved alcohol (2024)



7+

Types of cancer are linked to alcohol use, even at "safe" levels (U.S. Surgeon General)

Adults

- It's common not to drink: **almost half** of adults didn't drink in the past month
- **16.4%** of adults report binge drinking

Youth

- **22.1%** high school students report drinking in the past month
- Higher percentages of female students report alcohol use (current, binge, and lifetime) than males

3 What you can do

Because no amount of alcohol is risk-free, choosing to drink less—or not at all—is the most effective way to lower your cancer risk and improve your health.



Notice when, where, and why you drink



Plan alcohol-free days or choose a weekly limit that feels realistic for you



Talk to a friend, doctor, or counselor if you want help cutting back



Never drive or ride with someone who is impaired by alcohol or drugs



Don't drink if you are pregnant or trying to become pregnant



Set clear rules, don't supply alcohol to minors, and secure alcohol safely at home

Connect with a [Peer Recovery Support Center](#) or the [MA Substance Use Helpline](#) for free alcohol recovery resources. Call or text "HOPE" to (800) 327-5050.

4 Additional resources

You have a right to clear and accurate information to help you make your own choices about alcohol and health.

- Find more tools and guidance on alcohol health through the [MA DPH website](#)
- For community-level information on alcohol use, visit the [Bureau of Substance Addiction Dashboard](#)

5 Data sources

- [National Syndromic Surveillance Program](#)
- [Fatality Analysis Reporting System](#)
- [Massachusetts Registry of Vital Records and Statistics](#)
- [U.S. Surgeon General Advisory](#)
- [Massachusetts Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#)
- [Massachusetts Youth Health Survey](#)
- [Bureau of Substance Addiction Dashboard](#)