



Guidelines for Alcohol Consumption

The following guidelines are from the National Health & Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) "Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol" (2009).

Guideline 1

Reducing the risk of alcohol-related harm over a lifetime

The lifetime risk of harm from drinking alcohol increases with the amount consumed.

For healthy men and women, drinking **no more than two standard drinks on any day** reduces the **lifetime risk of harm** from alcohol-related disease or injury.

Please note that this is a reduction from a low-risk level of four to two drinks for males over the previous guidelines.

Guideline 2

Reducing the risk of injury on a single occasion of drinking

On a single occasion of drinking, the risk of alcohol-related injury increases with the amount consumed.

For healthy men and women, drinking no more than four standard drinks on a single occasion reduces the risk of alcohol-related injury arising from that occasion.

Please note that this is a reduction from a maximum of six to four drinks on one occasion for males compared to the previous guidelines.

Guideline 3

Children and young people under 18 years of age

Parents and carers should be advised that for children and young people under 18 years of age, not drinking alcohol is the safest option.

- Children under 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking and that for this age group—not drinking alcohol is especially important.
- For young people aged 15–17 years, the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking for as long as possible.

Guideline 3 reflects growing concern about the high rates of alcohol-related injury and self-harm in pre-teen and teenage drinkers and the potential damage to developing brains from binge drinking.

Guideline 4

Maternal alcohol consumption can harm the developing fetus or breastfeeding baby.

- For women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, not drinking is the safest option.
- For women who are breastfeeding, not drinking is the safest option.

Alcohol-free days

Further reductions in the lifetime risk of alcohol-related disease or injury can be achieved by reducing the number of occasions of drinking across a lifetime, for example through regular alcohol-free days.

Why is the recommended level for males now the same as for females?

The levels are now the same because, even though females are at greater risk of alcohol-related disease than males from equivalent amounts of alcohol, males are far more likely than females to engage in high-risk activities when, or shortly after, drinking and to suffer injury and death as a result.

The complete guidelines can be found at www.alcoholguidelines.gov.au

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