

The proof **HAS NEVER BEEN STRONGER.**

Campaign Toolkit



Building public awareness of the alcohol-cancer
link in British Columbia

**BC
CAN
CER**

Provincial Health Services Authority



The Proof Campaign

Resources for Health Professionals

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Campaign Background

The “[Proof](#)”, a campaign led by BC Cancer, aims to raise public awareness about the link between cancer and alcohol and the benefits of drinking less. The campaign shares key facts (aka the “proof”) to help draw attention to the cancer risks associated with alcohol use, and looks to empower people to know how much they are drinking and whether their drinking may be harming their health.

Let’s face it: alcohol is everywhere in our society. It’s widely consumed by many British Columbians and others around the world. Some people drink to mark a happy event with a celebration, while some drink to relieve the stress.

The COVID-19 pandemic was no exception. According to recent data, British Columbians drank more alcohol during the first year of the pandemic than any previous year over the past two decades—up from an average of 8.2 L to 9.3 L of pure ethanol per year.¹ To put this in perspective, 9.3 L of pure ethanol is equivalent to 104 bottles of 12 per cent wine per year, or around two bottles a week per person.

The proof is clear: alcohol causes cancer in at least seven sites of the body.² And yet, many Canadians aren’t aware of this link.

There is no better time than now to arm British Columbians with the knowledge they need to make well-informed decisions about their health. The “Proof” campaign comes hot on the heels of Canada’s recent update to its [Guidance on Alcohol and Health](#). The campaign will run from April to May 2023, with a media strategy that includes digital advertising on social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter), Google Ads as well as out-of-home advertising (e.g., bus shelters, Skytrain stations, restaurants, bars/ pubs, etc.).

The “Proof” is part of a collaborative initiative between BC Cancer and the Ministry of Health.



Key Messages

- The proof speaks for itself. Alcohol causes cancer.
- It's important for you to have the facts (aka "the proof") so that you can understand your alcohol intake and make informed decisions about drinking.
- We now know that drinking even a small amount of alcohol can increase your chances of developing certain cancers.
- Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health outlines the health risks of alcohol and can help you make an informed decision on whether you drink and how much.
- If you drink, reducing your consumption can improve your health. To reduce your cancer risk, it's recommended to limit your alcohol intake to two standard drinks or less per week.
- Visit the-proof.ca to learn more about the link between alcohol and cancer, and take the quiz to see how many standard drinks you consume in an average week.

PRIMARY TARGET AUDIENCE
B.C RESIDENTS BETWEEN THE
AGES OF 25 AND 49

Supporting Facts

- Drinking about 3 drinks a day nearly doubles the risk of developing cancer of the mouth and throat.³
- Alcohol contributes to 7,000 cancer cases in Canada per year.⁴
- Alcohol contributed to 2,500 cases of colorectal cancer in Canada in 2020.⁴
- Alcohol was linked to 1,700 breast cancer cases in 2020.⁴
- Drinking 2 to 3 drinks a day doubles the risk of developing cancers of the head and neck.³
- Nearly 1 in 5 Canadians 18+ increased their alcohol use during the pandemic.⁵

Campaign Goals

- ✓ Increase awareness of the link between alcohol consumption and cancer;
- ✓ Increase awareness of Canada's new low-risk alcohol drinking guidelines and the data behind them (the "what" and the "why"); and,
- ✓ Provide tools to help audiences better understand their alcohol intake and corresponding risk levels.

About the Toolkit

This toolkit was created to be a communications resource for individuals, groups or organizations who are interested in raising public awareness of the cancer harms related to alcohol use.

We know that people rely on their primary care providers, community health workers, public health nurses and other allied health professionals for up-to-date advice. As a trusted source of information, they play a crucial role in informing and educating patients, clients and the public alike about the alcohol-cancer link, and in connecting individuals to necessary community supports.

In this toolkit, you will find:

- Social media messages and images;
- Print-ready materials, including an information sheet, promotional posters and a standard drink graphic;
- Answers to common questions about alcohol and cancer; and,
- A list of additional resources and tools that you may find helpful.

You may wish to use or adjust one or all of the supplied materials to help drive awareness. You are in the best position to determine which information would be most useful in your setting.

Whichever way you choose to spread the word, we thank you for your support!

Social Media Assets

Please participate in the “Proof” campaign by sharing the images and suggested captions linked below. Feel free to use the official hashtag, **#LowerProofLife**, in every related post to show your participation and support.

Don't forget to follow along on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) to see more of the campaign in action!

01

If the statistics in this ad surprise you, you're not alone. Many people don't know that alcohol causes cancer.

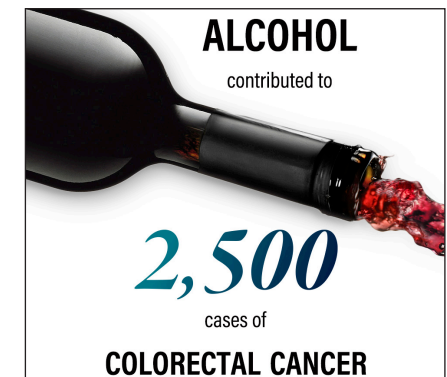
By cutting down on your drinking, you'll not only lower your risk of alcohol-related cancers, but you'll also start to see health and wellness benefits, like getting a better night's sleep and having more energy throughout the day.

Thinking about living a #LowerProofLife? Start by taking our quiz at the-proof.ca/take-the-quiz to find out how many standard drinks you're consuming in an average week.

02

Did you know that all types of alcoholic beverages—wine, cocktails or beers—can increase your risk of cancer? And the more you consume, the higher your risk.

What counts as a standard drink? Take the interactive, confidential quiz at the the-proof.ca/take-the-quiz to find out how many standard drinks you're consuming in an average week. #LowerProofLife



Social Media Assets

03

Although it can be a big change, the best way to reduce your risk is by drinking less. There are many ways you can reduce your drinking and live a #LowerProofLife.

Try replacing after-work beers at your usual hangout with alcohol-free cocktails at a spot you've never tried before, or start exploring the wide world of zero-proof wine, beers, and spirits.

Visit the-proof.ca for more tips and delicious recipes for zero-proof cocktails that you can try at home.



04

Conversations around alcohol use can be hard, but when you know the facts, you can make informed choices.

You can reduce your health risk by living a #LowerProofLife - reducing the number of drinks you have per week.

Want to know what counts as a standard drink? Take our quiz at the-proof.ca/take-the-quiz to find out.



CLICK HERE TO
DOWNLOAD

Shareable Materials for Health Professionals

ALCOHOL & CANCER
An Information Sheet for Health Professionals

The proof has never been stronger. Drinking alcohol of any kind is a risk factor for at least seven types of cancer. Less consumption means less risk of cancer.

KEY MESSAGES

- Alcohol contains known carcinogens that can increase the risk of several types of cancer. The link between alcohol and cancer has been studied extensively and is widely recognized by the medical and scientific community.
- Alcohol consumption contributes to roughly 7000 cancer cases each year in Canada. Most of those cases are breast or colon cancer, followed by cancers of the rectum, mouth and throat, liver, esophagus and larynx.
- Canada's [Guidance on Alcohol and Health](#) advises that the more alcohol a person consumes, the higher their risk of developing cancer. Even one drink per day increases cancer risk.
- It is recommended that adults consider reducing their consumption to 2 standard drinks or less per week.
- Health professionals should be aware of the link between alcohol and cancer and be prepared to discuss this with their clients or patients, particularly those who drink regularly or heavily.

Summary

In January 2021, two-thirds (66%) of Canadians aged 15 or older reported consuming alcohol at least once in the previous 30 days, making it the most used psychoactive substance in Canada. One of the most serious long-term consequences of alcohol consumption is cancer.

According to the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), alcohol is classified as a Group 1 carcinogen, meaning it is a known cause of cancer in humans. In fact, in 2020 alone, alcohol consumption was responsible for more than 741,000, or 4.1 per cent, of all new cancer cases worldwide, with 1000 cases in Canada.¹ Although heavy drinking patterns represented the largest cancer burden, researchers estimated that even light to moderate drinking—less than 20 g or roughly one to two drinks, per day—contributed to more than 100,000 cases worldwide in 2020, or one in seven.²

Despite the evidence, many Canadians don't know that alcohol causes cancer and many still believe there are health benefits to alcohol. Here in B.C., survey data in 2022 show that 70 per cent of adults 19 and older believed small amounts of alcohol can be beneficial, 61 per cent reported the alcohol in moderation doesn't do any harm, and only 56 per cent believed that any level of alcohol can have a negative impact.³

Many Canadians don't know that alcohol causes cancer.

Alcohol can cause at least 7 types of cancer.

BC CANCER
British Columbia Cancer Society

Information Sheet for Health Professionals

ALCOHOL & CANCER
Frequently Asked Questions

Does drinking alcohol really cause cancer?

Yes, alcohol consumption has been definitively linked to an increased risk of several types of cancer.

Alcohol is a carcinogen, which means it is known to cause cancer in humans. In Canada, it's estimated that drinking alcohol contributes to roughly 7000 cases of cancer each year.¹

This does not mean that everyone who drinks alcohol will develop cancer. However, the chances of developing cancer is higher among people who drink alcohol, especially among those who drink more than two standard drinks per week. Drinking two to three drinks a day, for instance, doubles the risk of developing cancer of the esophagus.²

How does alcohol increase the risk of cancer?

Every alcoholic drink contains ethanol (ethyl alcohol). When we drink alcohol, our bodies break down the ethanol into acetaldehyde and other chemicals. Acetaldehyde damages DNA and stops our bodies from repairing the damage. That damage over time may be responsible for cancer.

Alcohol use can also affect the risk of cancer in other ways by:

- Increasing blood levels of certain hormones such as estrogen, a risk factor for breast cancer.
- Making it easier for other toxins, like those found in tobacco smoke, to pass through the mouth and into the bloodstream.
- Affecting the body's ability to process and absorb important nutrients, such as folate, which are essential for cells to stay healthy.
- Contributing to unwanted weight gain.

What is a standard drink?

A standard drink is a measure of the pure ethanol being consumed. It is not the total amount of liquid in a glass. In Canada, a standard drink is any drinking container 13.45 grams or 17.05 mL of pure alcohol. Common examples include:

- 341 mL (12 oz.) bottle of 5% alcohol beer, cider or cooler
- 142 mL (5 oz.) glass of 12% alcohol wine
- 43 mL (1.5 oz.) shot of 40% hard liquor (vodka, rum, whisky, gin, etc.)

There is limited but suggestive evidence that alcohol consumption might increase the risk of lung, pancreatic and skin cancer.³ However, more research is still needed in this area.

Alcohol can cause at least 7 types of cancer.

BC CANCER
British Columbia Cancer Society

Frequently Asked Questions

Drinking 2 to 3 drinks a day
DOUBLES
the risk of developing
cancers of the head and neck.

THE MORE YOU DRINK, THE MORE YOU RISK.

THE PROOF SPEAKS FOR ITSELF.

Take the quiz to assess your risk at the-proof.ca

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The proof

Clinic Posters (A4)

All Drinks Are **NOT** Created Equal

The guidelines in Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health suggest that if you do consume alcoholic drinks, sticking to **1-2 standard drinks** per week is low risk for overall health. But not all standard drinks look the same.

Light beer (5% alcohol)	Bottle/can 12 oz./341 mL 1 Standard drink	Tallboy 16 oz./473 mL 1.4 Standard drink	Pint 20 oz./568 mL 1.7 Standard drink
Dark beer (8% alcohol)	Bottle/can 12 oz./341 mL 1.6 Standard drink	Tallboy 16 oz./473 mL 2.1 Standard drink	Pint 20 oz./568 mL 2.7 Standard drink
Cooler/cider/ hard seltzer (5% alcohol)	Bottle/can 12 oz./341 mL 1 Standard drink	Tallboy 16 oz./473 mL 1.4 Standard drink	Pint 20 oz./568 mL 1.7 Standard drink
Wine (12% alcohol)	Tasting 2 oz./57 mL 0.4 Standard drink	Restaurant pour 5 oz./142 mL 1 Standard drink	Large pour 7 oz./199 mL 1.4 Standard drink
Spirit (40% alcohol)	Small shot 1.5 oz./43 mL 0.7 Standard drink	Single shot 1.5 oz./43 mL 1 Standard drink	Double shot 3 oz./85 mL 2 Standard drink

Visit the-proof.ca/take-the-quiz to find out how many standard drinks you're consuming.

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Standard Drink Poster (A3)

CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD

Additional Resources

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES, POLICY BRIEFS & REPORTS

- Bagnardi, V., Blangiardo, M., La Vecchia, C., & Corrao, G. (2001). Alcohol consumption and the risk of cancer: a meta-analysis. *Alcohol Research & Health. The Journal of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism*, 25(4), 263–270. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11910703/>
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- Levesque, C., Sanger, N., Edalati, H., & Paradis, C. (2022). *Update of Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines: Evidence review technical report*. Ottawa, Ont.: Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. <https://ccsa.ca/update-canadas-low-risk-alcohol-drinking-guidelines-evidence-review-technical-report-report>
- World Heart Federation (2022). *The impact of alcohol consumption on cardiovascular health: Myths and measures*. <https://world-heart-federation.org/wp-content/uploads/WHF-Policy-Brief-Alcohol.pdf>

WEBSITES

For reliable sources of information about alcohol and its effects on health, here are some suggestions:

- [International Agency for Research on Cancer](#) (IARC): A specialized cancer agency of the World Health Organization, IARC offers information on global trends in alcohol consumption and related health issues, as well as guidance on effective policies for reducing harmful alcohol use.
- [World Cancer Research Fund](#) (WCRF): WCRF is a network of cancer charities with a global reach, dedicated to the prevention and survival of cancer through a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight and being more physically active.
- [Canadian Cancer Society](#) (CCS): The CCS provides evidence-based information and resources on how alcohol consumption and other behaviours affect the risk of cancer, as well as resources and support services for those affected by cancer.
- [Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research](#) (CISUR): The CISUR is a research institute that focuses on substance use, addiction, and related harms, including those related to alcohol. CISUR offers a wide range of information on alcohol-related topics, including research publications, data and statistics, policy briefs and educational resources. They also provide a number of tools and resources for prevention and harm reduction.
- [Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction](#) (CCSA): The CCSA provides information on substance use, including alcohol, and its effects on health, as well as resources and tools for prevention and treatment.
- [Health Canada](#): Health Canada provides information on alcohol and its effects on health, including guidelines for safe alcohol consumption, as well as information on prevention and treatment of alcohol-related harm.
- [National Cancer Institute](#) (NCI): NCI is the U.S. government's principal agency for cancer research. The website offers comprehensive information about cancer prevention and screening, diagnosis and treatment, research across the cancer spectrum, clinical trials, and news and links to other NCI websites.



SUBSTANCE USE RESOURCES & SUPPORTS

- [Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention](#) or 1-800-784-2433 (1-800-SUICIDE).
- [Alcohol and Drug Information & Referral Service](#) or 1-800-663-1441. Provides information about detox, counselling, treatment programs, recovery homes and support groups. Also covers education and prevention resources, and other concerns such as harm reduction and fetal alcohol and drug effects.
- [HealthLink BC](#) or call 8-1-1 for mental health and substance use information and services.
- [HeretoHelp](#): Mental health and alcohol and other drug use information.
- [Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre](#): Provincial resource centre that provides mental health and substance use information, resources, and peer support to parents, caregivers and their families across B.C.
- [First Nations Health Authority Mental Wellness & Substance Use](#): Information for First Nations communities on mental wellness, substance use prevention and treatment, and other culturally-safe supports.
- [Wellbeing by the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions](#): Navigate and connect with mental health and substance use information and supports.
- [From Grief to Action's Coping Kit](#): Toolkit for parents or caregivers who are dealing with a loved one's substance use.

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4. Runggay, H., Shield, K., Charvat, H., Ferrari, P., Sornpaisarn, B., Obot, I., et al. (2021) Global burden of cancer in 2020 attributable to alcohol consumption: a population-based study. *Lancet Oncology* 22(8), P1071-1080. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1470-2045\(21\)00279-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1470-2045(21)00279-5)
5. Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. (2020). COVID-19 and increased alcohol consumption: NANOS Poll Summary Report. Available from <https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2020-04/CCSA-NANOS-Alcohol-Consumption-During-COVID-19-Report-2020-en.pdf>

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