

Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

An archive of past wellness articles is available at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/9966.asp>

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Safe Summer Weekends

Many Albertans like to take advantage of the long summer evenings and warmer weather to get outdoors, go traveling or visit with family and friends. Weekends and celebrations can be fun for Albertans of all ages.

If you, your friends or family are planning on using alcohol as part of your celebratory gatherings, there are some things you can do to help keep you and those around you safe.

Drinking alcohol is not risk-free. Experts have set low-risk drinking guidelines to help limit the risks of alcohol including what constitutes as a standard drink.

Men should avoid drinking more than three standard drinks in a day and 15 in a week, while women should limit consumption to two drinks in a day and 10 in a week. Be sure to have non-drinking days as part of your weekly routine, and on special occasions reduce your risk of injury and harm by drinking more than three (women) or four (men) drinks in a night.

The following common drinks contain equal amounts of alcohol and are often referred to as a drink or a standard drink:

- One mixed drink containing 43 mL (1.5 fl oz) of 40 percent hard liquor, such as vodka, gin, rye whiskey, or rum
- One 142 mL (5 fl oz) glass of 12 per cent wine
- One 341 mL (12 fl oz) bottle of 5 per cent beer or wine cooler.

Choosing to not drink is okay, but if you do decide to drink, here are a few tips to help reduce health and safety risks:

- There are many situations when alcohol should be avoided entirely, like if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. Don't drink if you're planning on driving or using heavy machinery, if you're working or expected to make important decisions, or if you're responsible for other's safety.



- Those living with physical or mental health problems should also avoid alcohol, or if you're taking certain medications.
- It's important to teach young people about the risks associated with alcohol, as well. If you are the parent of a youth, be sure to have a conversation with your teen about drinking and its effects.
- There are a variety of ways to help reduce your alcohol consumption this summer, or any season. Set limits for yourself before you decide to drink, taking your age, gender, body size and health into consideration when deciding on your limits. Eating before and while you're drinking and alternating between alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages is also a good idea.
- Also, remember to support others in their decisions to reduce alcohol intake. Offer alternative beverages for family or friends who don't drink alcohol or are trying to cut back on their use. If you're concerned, you can talk to a health care professional about strategies to reduce your use.

For more information on Canadian Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines, visit the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (www.ccsa.ca) website.

If you have questions or concerns about your alcohol consumption, or that of someone else, visit your local health care professional or community health services.