

# Rethink How You Drink: Alcohol & Aging

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Take Action



**CCSMH**  
CANADIAN COALITION  
FOR SENIORS'  
MENTAL HEALTH



**CCSMPA**  
LA COALITION CANADIENNE  
POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE  
DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES

# Aging and Alcohol

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As you age, your body accumulates more fat and less muscle mass and water, which means your body processes alcohol more slowly and you become more sensitive to its effects. The amount of alcohol in your blood after one drink is higher now than it was when you were younger.

Have you noticed that alcohol affects you differently than it used to?

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**It could be time to rethink  
how you drink.**



# Alcohol and your Health

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Alcohol is a depressant. This means it can slow down your brain and body and affect your thinking and behavior. This can feel relaxing, but drinking too much or too often can affect you differently as you get older.

## Alcohol can:

- Affect your balance, coordination, and reaction time which can increase your risk of falls and other injuries
- Interact badly with medications you may be taking
- Increase your risk of developing health conditions or mental health problems or make existing health conditions worse



**You may need to make changes to your drinking habits to reduce your health risks as you get older.**

# Drinking Less is Better

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Evidence is becoming clear that any alcohol consumption has a level of risk.

Drinking less is better.

## Tips for drinking less:

- Choose drinks with lower alcohol levels or dilute them with water or juice
- Eat a meal and drink water or juice before and during the time you are drinking
- Slow down your drinking pace
- Opt for alcohol free drink alternatives like mocktails
- Plan non-drinking days in your week



# Did You Know?

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A 'standard' drink in Canada is any drink that contains about 13.45 grams of pure alcohol.



**330ml (12 oz.)**

1 bottle of beer, cider or cooler at 5% alcohol



**142ml (5 oz.)**

1 glass of wine at 12% alcohol



**43ml (1.5 oz.)**

1 shot of distilled alcohol at 40% alcohol

Remember that your age, body weight, and any health conditions will impact how you respond to alcohol.

**As you get older, consider further reducing your drinking or perhaps even not drinking at all.**

# Alcohol Free Alternatives

Cutting back on alcohol doesn't have to mean cutting back on fun!

Whether you are out with friends and family or plan to host at home, there are alcohol-free ways to stay social and keep the good times going.

The next time you are out at a restaurant or bar, consider ordering a mocktail, zero-proof cocktail, or a non-alcoholic beer. These drinks have no alcohol but have similar flavor profiles to alcoholic drinks, so they make great alternative options!



Scan this QR code to access our zero proof drink recipes

# Thinking about making a change to your drinking?

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Making a change to your drinking habits can be hard. With support from friends and family, you can make it happen!

If you are drinking more that you would like to, here are some things you can do:

- Talk to your healthcare provider about your alcohol use and steps you can take to manage your drinking
- Talk to a counselor for advice on how to make a change
- Talk to a friend or look for a peer support program in your area.

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*Remember, it is never too late to make a change to your drinking!*

## DID YOU KNOW?

Zero proof drinks or mocktails make great alcohol-free drink options.

**Try one of our zero proof drink recipes at your next social gathering!**



For more information visit  
the Canadian Coalition  
for Seniors' Mental Health  
(CCSMH) website:

[www.ccsmh.ca/substance-use-addiction/alcohol-guidelines](http://www.ccsmh.ca/substance-use-addiction/alcohol-guidelines)



**This brochure is adapted from the Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health (CCSMH) Canadian Guidelines on Alcohol Use Disorder Among Older Adults**

*Disclaimer: The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada. This brochure is intended for information purposes only. It is not intended to be interpreted or used as a standard of medical practice.*

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