



Messages for guidance on alcohol consumption

On the basis of the report on the scientific evidence concerning the harmful effects of alcohol, the Federal Commission for Alcohol-Related Issues (FCAL)¹ has formulated the following guidance on the consumption of alcohol.

The consumption of alcohol entails health risks, and in the large majority of cases there is a relationship between dose and response for alcohol-related diseases. The risks vary depending on the person, the circumstances in which they drink, their age and their state of health. The messages about what constitutes “low-risk consumption” should be differentiated to reflect this.

In the interests of health, the following guidelines should be observed:

<p>Guideline 1</p> <p>Respect for alcohol-free lifestyles</p>	<p>Some people refrain from drinking alcohol for personal, religious or health reasons. This choice should be respected and supported.</p> <p>Alcohol is not necessary to prevent cardiovascular disease. Eating a healthy diet and getting enough exercise are far more effective means of prevention.</p>	
<p>Guideline 2</p> <p>Healthy adults</p>	<p>Healthy adult men should not be drinking more than two to a maximum of three standard units² of alcohol per day.</p>	<p>Healthy adult women should not be drinking more than one to a maximum of two standard units of alcohol per day.</p>
	<p>At least two alcohol-free days a week should be observed.</p> <p>If on rare, exceptional occasions you drink more than this, consumption should be limited to five standard units if you're a man, and four if you're a woman. This amount of alcohol has a clearly measurable effect on reaction time and psychomotor performance, and significantly increases your risk of accident and disease.</p>	
<p>Guideline 3</p> <p>Children, young people and young adults</p>	<p>Children and young people up to age 16 should not be drinking alcohol.</p> <p>Given that regular alcohol consumption increases the risk of developing problematic drinking patterns and impairs the development of the brain and body, young adults should only be consuming alcohol infrequently and in small amounts. Young adults are more likely than average to suffer an accident or injury as a result of consuming alcohol. It's particularly important to avoid episodic heavy drinking (binge drinking).</p>	
<p>Guideline 4</p>	<p>It's advisable to refrain from drinking alcohol if you're pregnant or are planning to conceive. On the basis of the research findings it's not possible to set a definitive limit for low-risk alcohol consumption during</p>	

¹ Marc Marthaler: Risiken für alkoholbedingte Krankheiten und Mortalität, Grundlagen für eine Orientierungshilfe zum risikoarmen Alkoholkonsum (Risks for alcohol-related disease and mortality: a basis for guidance on low-risk alcohol consumption), Sucht Schweiz 2013.

² In Switzerland, a standard unit of alcohol is 10-12g of pure alcohol.

<p>Pregnant and nursing women</p>	<p>pregnancy.</p> <p>It's also advisable to avoid alcohol while you're breastfeeding. Alcohol gets into the infant's system via breast milk. If you decide to drink during breastfeeding anyway, you should exercise restraint. To give your body the chance to clear the alcohol, after drinking one standard unit of alcohol you should wait at least two hours before breastfeeding your child (four hours after drinking two standard units).</p>
<p>Guideline 5</p> <p>Older people</p>	<p>As you get older it makes sense to be more careful and adapt your alcohol consumption according to your state of health. Older people are more susceptible to the effects of alcohol because body water content decreases with age, meaning that the alcohol is spread through a smaller amount of water and leads to an increase in blood alcohol levels. Not only this, but older people are more likely to suffer physical harm or accidents as a result of consuming alcohol, and drinking can exacerbate existing conditions. The fact that older people need medication more often also means it makes sense to be more careful.</p>
<p>Guideline 6</p> <p>People taking medication</p>	<p>If you're on medication you should avoid alcohol as far as possible or only drink in great moderation. You should talk to your doctor to find out whether you should be drinking, and if so, how much.</p>
<p>Guideline 7</p> <p>Driving, at work and during exercise</p>	<p>Even one glass of alcohol is enough to reduce your concentration and cognitive ability. To avoid the risk of causing an accident or injuring other people because you've been drinking, it's sensible to refrain from consuming alcohol if you're driving or engaged in activities requiring greater concentration.</p> <p>Alcohol causes dehydration, so during intense exercise or sport it's better to drink only alcohol-free beverages to keep your body fluids up.</p>