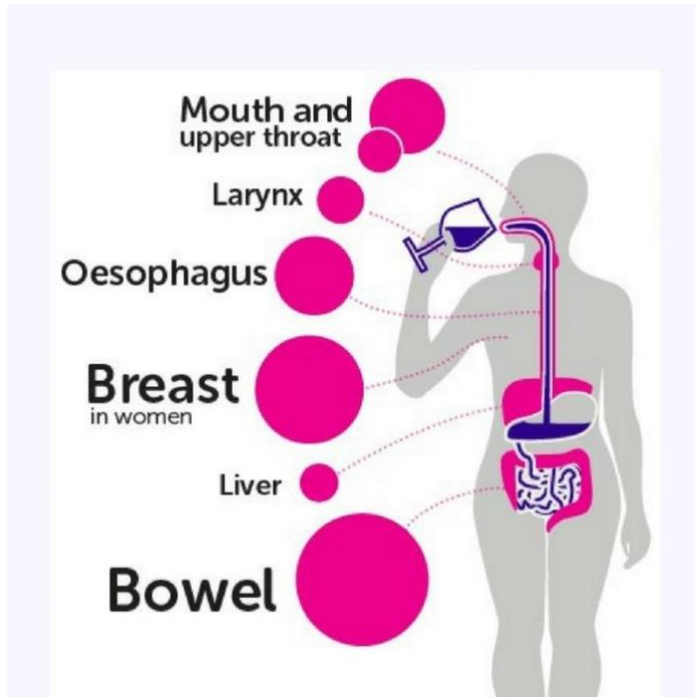


Importance of Limiting Alcohol in Cancer Prevention

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There are lots of good health reasons for cutting down on alcohol; reducing your cancer risk is just one of them. There is strong evidence that alcohol causes several types of cancer including: breast, liver, bowel, oral, upper throat, larynx & oesophageal.



The general recommendation for reducing cancer risk is to abstain from drinking alcohol completely, but if choosing to drink to follow national guidelines. For example, in the UK the guidance is to drink no more than 14 units a week spread over at least 3 days for both men and women. In the Republic of Ireland, the HSE has devised low risk weekly guidelines for the public to follow. They state 11 standard drinks for women and no more than 17 for men should be spread throughout the week with at least 2 alcohol-free days.

When alcohol is broken down in our bodies it can damage their cells. Alcohol is converted into a toxic chemical called acetaldehyde. This can cause cancer by damaging the DNA and stopping cells from repairing the damage. It can also increase the levels of some hormones, such as oestrogen increasing the risk of breast cancer. It is important as oncology nurses we are aware of the risks of alcohol consumption and cancer in order to provide practical advice to patients on ways to reduce their and our own alcohol intake.

Some recommendations from the World Cancer Research Fund include:

Opting for the smallest serving size- remembering to avoid double measurements of spirits even if they are promoted as better value.

Alternative- replacing every alcoholic drink with a non-alcoholic one such as water or a soft drink or an alcohol-free version of wine, beer, spirits.

Dilution- dilute alcoholic drinks with a low-calorie mixer. For example, instead of a full glass of wine, fill half and fill the remainder of the glass with soda water or a sugar free lemonade.

Avoid salty snacks- Salty snacks can make you thirsty, tempting you to drink even more!

Drink water first- Before reaching for an alcoholic drink, keep yourself hydrated with water first.

Sip slowly- Take a mouthful at a time.

Plan ahead and keep track- Think ahead in regard to social plans coming up and set an alcohol limit.

Change your drinking habits- Not all social events have to involve alcohol. Exercise or take up a new creative hobby to relieve boredom or stress.

Buy low alcohol- or alcohol-free alternatives- There is a wide range of alcohol-free options available nowadays!

Alcohol is one of the most preventable causes of cancer after smoking.

The less you drink, the lower your risk of cancer.

Useful resources

https://www2.hse.ie/living-well/alcohol/health/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAz9ieBhCIARIsACB0oGLAfBSJggcQJHMYgbij6lxmeyGPDUHdJFOtmsm1JzuYeDXBtDNcvdQaAiZdEALw_wcB&gclidsrc=aw.ds

https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/health-promotion-knowledge-gateway/guidance-alcohol-consumption_en

<https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/causes-of-cancer/alcohol-and-cancer>

<https://www.wcrf-uk.org/preventing-cancer/what-can-increase-your-risk-of-cancer/alcohol-and-cancer-risk/>

😊 Remember EONS is always here to help 😊