



FAX about...



durham.ca/hcp

Alcohol and Cancer

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, only one third of Ontario residents are aware that they can **reduce their risk of cancer by reducing** the amount of **alcohol** they drink. As little as **one drink a day** can **increase their risk** for cancer of the mouth, neck, throat, liver, female breast, colon and rectum. Research indicates that by reducing the amount of alcohol people drink, as many as **3,000 cancer-related deaths could be prevented each year** in Ontario.

Alcohol is classified as a **Group 1 carcinogen** by the International Agency for Research on Cancer. There are four ways alcohol causes cancer: it can – damage cells in the body; increase the damage caused by tobacco use; affect the hormones linked to breast cancer in women; and break down into cancer-causing chemicals. It doesn't matter whether a person drinks beer, wine or liquor, they all have the same risk for causing cancer.

While new measures have been implemented across Ontario to make alcohol more accessible, research shows that **increased access** to alcohol results in a **rise in alcohol consumption**, which is a concern for public health.

Healthcare professionals are in a **key position** to assess their clients and share pertinent information about the health risks associated with alcohol use. Evidence indicates **that no one should begin drinking alcohol or drink more often based on potential health benefits**. For many people, the possible benefits do **not** outweigh the risks and avoiding alcohol is the best course. **Eating a healthy diet and being physically active have much greater health benefits** and have been more extensively studied. By dispelling myths about any perceived health benefits of alcohol, and providing evidence-based information, healthcare providers can assist their patients to make informed choices.

In 2017, there were 41 deliveries of infants with neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) in Durham Region for a rate of **6 for every 1,000 births**. This represents a **300% increase** in the rate since 2008. **Screen** all patients, including women who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant or breastfeeding, for alcohol use and provide recommendations for reducing the risk of alcohol-related health harms.

Durham Region Health Department has developed a **new infographic** regarding the link between alcohol and cancer. This resource can be ordered online at durham.ca/HCP or by contacting the Durham Health Connection Line. As well, the **screening, brief intervention and referral (SBIR) clinical guideline** and related **tools** are available at www.sbir-diba.ca.

Durham Region Health Department: 905-668-7711, 1-800-841-2729

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If you prefer to receive this information in an electronic format please submit your request to healthresources@durham.ca

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-877-777-9613.

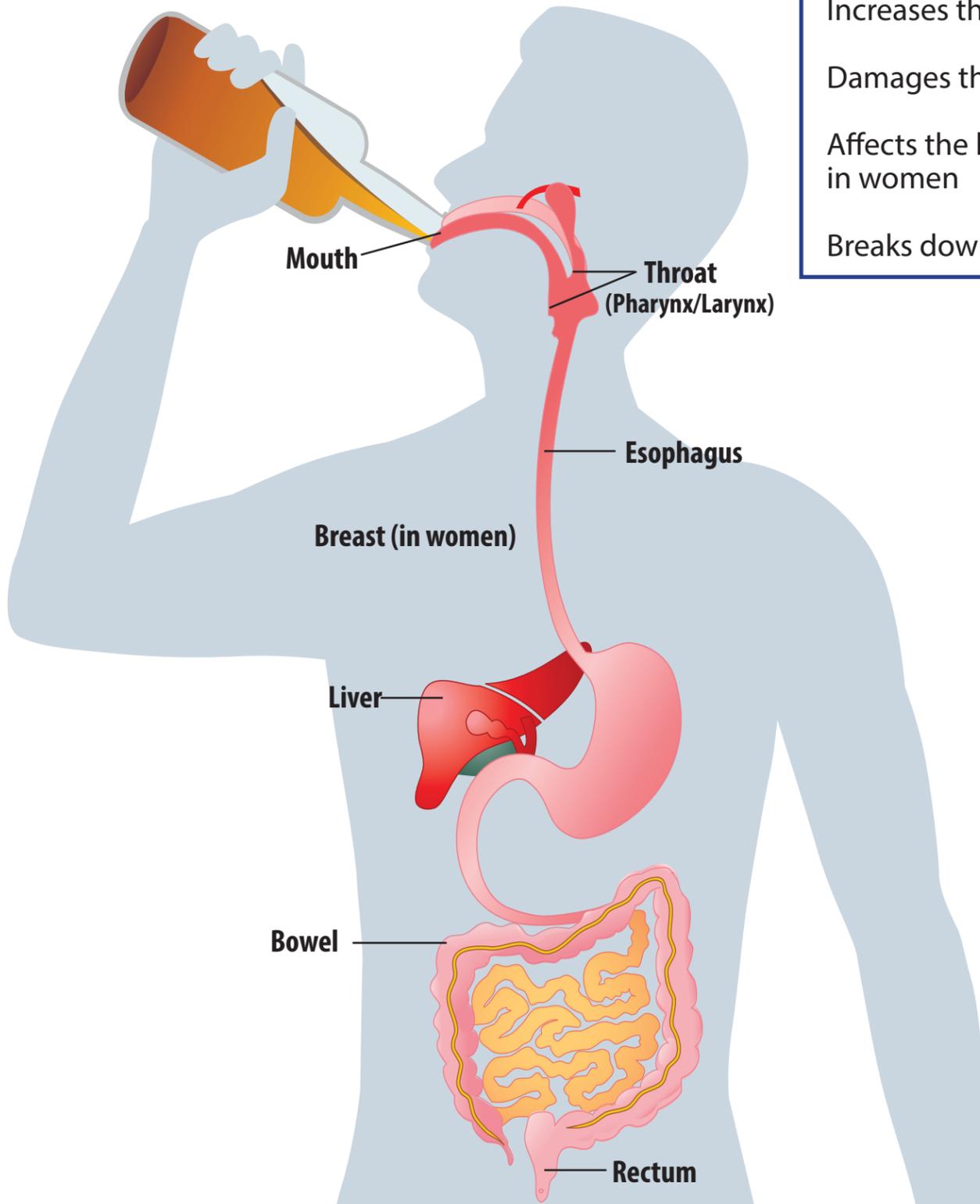
Alcohol can cause **7** types of cancer

By reducing the amount of alcohol people drink, as many as **3000** cancer deaths could be prevented each year in Ontario.

Drinking **any** type of alcohol raises your risk of developing cancer. The less alcohol you drink, the more you reduce your risk.

Four ways alcohol causes cancer

- Increases the damage caused by tobacco
- Damages the cells in the body
- Affects the hormones linked to breast cancer in women
- Breaks down into cancer-causing chemicals



If you choose to drink and want to reduce your risk of cancer, keep it to:

- less than **1** standard drink a day for women*
- less than **2** standard drinks a day for men

*the safest option for women who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant or breastfeeding is to not drink alcohol at all.



HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

What is a standard drink? Check out: durham.ca/alcohol



If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.

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