Below you can find out how many units there are in some common drinks.

- 2 units
  - A pint of ordinary strength (3–4%) lager, cider or bitter

- 3 units
  - A pint of premium strength (5–5.5%) lager, cider or extra strength bitter

- 9.5 units
  - 1 bottle of wine (12.5%)

- 3 units
  - A large 250 ml glass of wine (12.5%)

- 2 units
  - A 175 ml glass of wine (12.5%)

- Just under 3 units
  - A large 2 x 35 ml double measure of spirits (40%)

- 1 unit
  - A small 25 ml single measure of spirits (40%) with or without a mixer

- Just under 1.5 units
  - A 275 ml bottle of alcopop (5%)

Further information

About cutting down on alcohol
If you are concerned about how much you, a family member or friend drinks, please call:
- Drinkline, on freephone 0800 917 82 82
- Alcoholics Anonymous, on 0845 769 7555

About alcohol and cancer
For more about alcohol and the science behind our messages visit cruk.org/health

About cancer
For more about cancer visit our patient information website cruk.org/cancer-help

If you want to talk in confidence about cancer, call our information nurses on freephone 0808 800 4040.

Order our full range of leaflets free online at cruk.org/leaflets

About Cancer Research UK
CRUK pioneers life-saving research to bring forward the day when all cancers are cured. From our volunteers and supporters to our scientists, doctors and nurses, we’re all here to save more lives and prevent, control and cure all cancers. If you would like to support our work, please call 0300 123 1861 or visit our website cruk.org

The more you cut down on alcohol, the more you reduce the risk of cancer.
How does alcohol cause cancer?

Alcohol damages your cells

In the body, alcohol is changed into a chemical called acetaldehyde. This chemical causes hangovers, and it damages cells, which can cause cancer to develop.

Drinking alcohol increases the risk of cancer in many parts of the body it passes through including the mouth, throat and bowel.

Alcohol also causes cancer that starts in the liver. It can damage liver cells causing a disease called cirrhosis. This is a major cause of liver cancer.

Alcohol changes hormone levels in your body

Alcohol can affect levels of oestrogen in the body. This may be why alcohol increases the risk of breast cancer, which is linked to high levels of the hormone.

Alcohol worsens the dangers of smoking

Smoking increases the risk of many cancers. And research has found that people who smoke and drink increase the risk even further than only smoking or only drinking. This is because alcohol makes it easier for the harmful chemicals in tobacco smoke to be absorbed by the body.

How much can I drink safely?

Alcohol has a stronger effect on your risk of developing some types of cancer than others. Studies tell us that drinking small amounts of alcohol might have little effect on the risk of liver cancer, but a strong effect on mouth cancer risk. This makes it very difficult to recommend a single ‘safe’ level of drinking.

The common result in all studies of alcohol and cancer is that the more you drink, the greater the chance of developing cancer. The more you cut down on alcohol, the more you reduce the risk of cancer.

There is limited risk if you drink within the guidelines – around one standard drink a day (2-3 units) for women or two standard drinks a day (3-4 units) for men – but the risk increases the more you drink.