

<p><b>IN THIS ISSUE:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canada’s Guidance on Alcohol and Health</li> <li>Health risks, harms, and cost of alcohol consumption</li> <li>Family and intimate partner violence awareness resources</li> </ul>	<p><b>FROM:</b> Dr. Monica Hau, MD, MSc, CCFP, FRCPC Associate Medical Officer of Health</p>
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<p><b>Key Messages:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2023, Canada’s Guidance on Alcohol and Health replaced the Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines.</li> <li>There is a continuum of risk associated with alcohol consumption. Drinking less is better.</li> <li>Screening prevents alcohol related harms.</li> <li>Family and intimate partner violence was declared an epidemic by Peel Regional Council in June 2023.</li> <li>Consider posting FIPV awareness flyers in your clinics to connect victims to resources.</li> </ul>
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**Canada’s Guidance on Alcohol and Health (CGAH)**

In 2023, the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction updated the Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines with the release of [Canada’s Guidance on Alcohol and Health \(CGAH\): Final report](#). The overall recommendation for people living in Canada is to consider reducing their alcohol use.

**Health risks, harms, and cost of alcohol consumption**

- Alcohol consumption is a leading cause of preventable death, disability, and social problems. About 8 in 10 Ontarians aged 15 years and older report alcohol use.
- Women's alcohol consumption and associated harms have been increasing at a faster rate compared to men, narrowing the gender gap.
- Alcohol consumption increases the risk of hypertension, heart failure, high blood pressure, hemorrhagic stroke, and atrial fibrillation. Alcohol is a known carcinogen that may cause at least seven types of cancer.
- Alcohol intoxication is frequently associated with violent and aggressive behaviour and can increase the severity of violent incidents.

**Key messages from Canada’s Guidance on Alcohol and Health:**

**Reduce Alcohol Consumption**

- There is a [continuum of risk](#) associated with alcohol consumption.
- Higher consumption levels increase health risks. **Drinking less is better.**

**Sex and Gender Matter**

- Health risks for females increase more steeply above certain consumption levels than males due to biological factors (i.e., enzymes, genes, lean body weight/size, organ function, metabolism).
- When compared to females, far more injuries, violence, and deaths result from males’ alcohol consumption.

**Alcohol and Youth**

- Binge drinking among youth is common and associated with various risks, including injuries, violence, and poor academic performance.
- Youth should delay drinking as long as possible.

**Alcohol and Pregnancy**

- Alcohol is a teratogen that can cause lifelong impacts on the fetus, such as [fetal alcohol spectrum disorder \(FASD\)](#).
- During pregnancy or when trying to get pregnant, there is no known safe amount of alcohol use.

**Alcohol and Breastfeeding**

- Alcohol consumption can negatively impact breastfeeding by causing a decrease in milk production, early cessation of breastfeeding and effects on infant sleep patterns.
- Not drinking alcohol is the safest if breastfeeding.

### **When to advise NOT to consume alcohol:**

- Driving and using machinery and tools.
- Taking other drugs that interact with alcohol.
- Doing any kind of dangerous physical activity.
- Being responsible for the safety of others.
- Making important decisions.

### **Tips to promote drinking less this holiday season.**

- Set drinking limits to avoid binge drinking.
- Drink slowly and alternate alcohol with non-alcoholic drinks.
- Stay hydrated by drinking water.
- Eat before and while drinking.
- Choose alcohol-free options or activities.

Resources for patients to make informed decisions about their alcohol use are available at the [Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse](#).

### **Screening prevents alcohol related harms.**

The Centre for Addictions and Mental Health (CAMH) suggests the following [steps](#) to better detecting unhealthy alcohol use:

1. **Take an alcohol use history:** Incorporate questions about alcohol use into routine lifestyle questions for all patients.
2. **Use a screening tool:** Use the [AUDIT-C](#), AUDIT-10 ([manual](#) and [questionnaire](#)), or other validated screening questionnaire for all patients who drink alcohol.
3. **Order lab tests:** Request appropriate laboratory tests (e.g. GGT, CBC) if alcohol use is suspected to be a problem.
4. **Investigate alcohol as possible cause of other health issues:** Determine whether alcohol is contributing to other health issues a patient is experiencing (e.g. hypertension, gastrointestinal and psychiatric symptoms).

Visit the Region of Peel website for more information on [Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Substances](#).

### **Family and intimate partner violence (FIPV) awareness resources**

[Warning: Sensitive information follows containing family and intimate partner violence references].

Family and intimate partner violence (FIPV) was declared an epidemic by Peel Regional Council in June 2023. That year, Peel Police laid 617 FIPV strangulation charges, and 13,933 survivors accessed community support services. Common health consequences of FIPV can be physical, mental, sexual, and/or behavioural.

In collaboration with community partners and supported by Regional Council, Peel Region has developed an awareness campaign to address common FIPV misconceptions and share free resources available in the community to support survivors and bystanders.

Health professionals are encouraged to increase awareness of FIPV and available community resources by posting flyers in their office/clinic. [FIPV awareness flyers](#) are available in English, Punjabi, Gujarati, Urdu, Hindi, Tamil, and Arabic: <https://peelregion.ca/health/family-intimate-partner-violence#doing>.

Individuals experiencing FIPV can contact Victim Services of Peel at 905-568-1068 (Brampton/Mississauga) or Caledon\Dufferin Victim Services at 905-951-3838 (Caledon).