

Alcohol 101

What you need to know to support youth

Alcohol is the most used drug in Ontario and Canada. It is a depressant which slows down the function of the brain and thought processes. While socially acceptable, drinking any amount has risks for youth because their bodies and brains are still developing.

Standard drinks in Canada

In Canada, a standard drink is 17.05 ml or 13.45 grams of pure alcohol.

Drink Type	Volume	Alcohol %
 Beer/Cooler/Cider	341 ml (12 oz)	5%
 Wine	142 ml (5 oz)	12%
 Spirits	43 ml (1.5 oz)	40%



Why do youth use alcohol?



To have a good time and relax.



To relieve stress or deal with boredom.



To be social or fit in/deal with peer pressure.



Key message: It is important for youth to delay alcohol use for as long as possible.

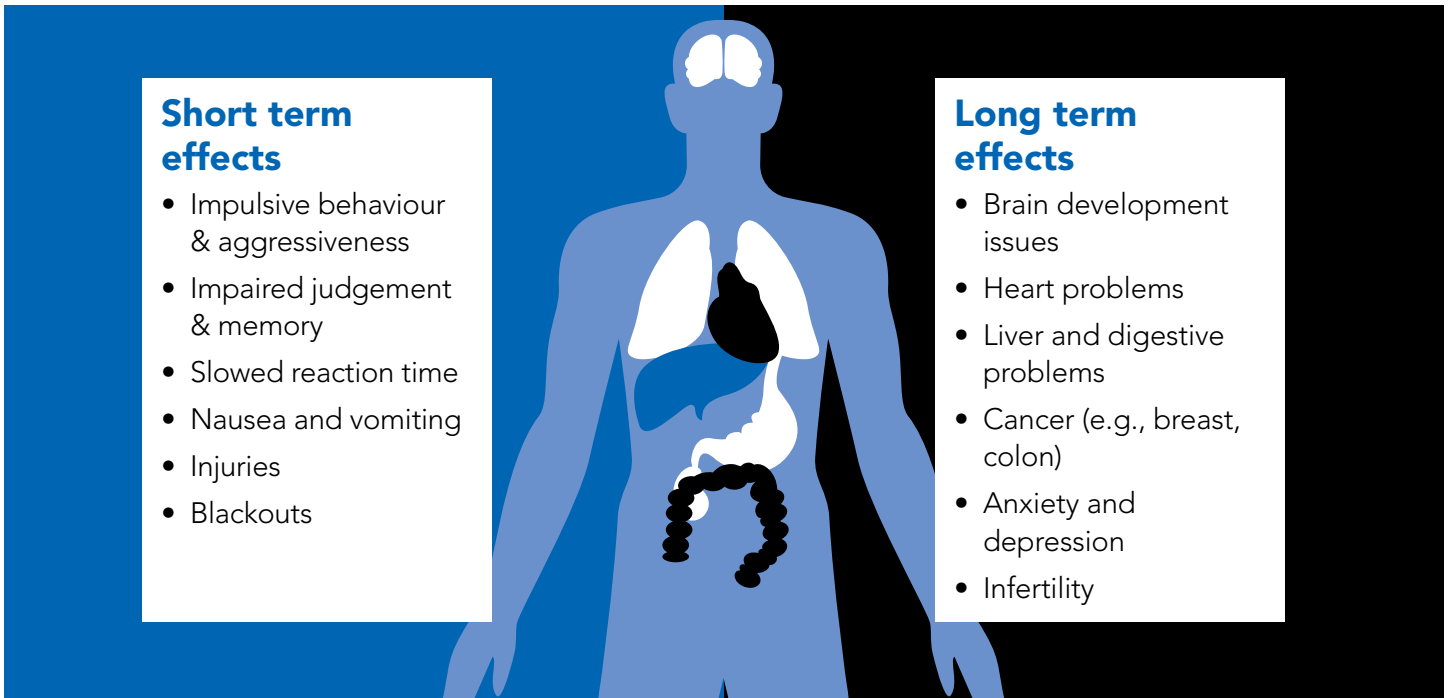
High risk drinking behaviours

These behaviours put youth at greater risk of experiencing negative impacts such as alcohol poisoning and injuries.

- **Binge drinking** is consuming five or more standard drinks on one occasion for males, or four or more standard drinks on one occasion for females that leads to a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of >0.08% for most people.
- **Pre-drinking** is defined as consuming alcohol before attending a party, event, or bar. Pre-drinking poses risks because it occurs in uncontrolled settings, leading to overconsumption.
- **Drinking Games** involve rules that determine when and how much participants should drink. This can result in excessive alcohol consumption and severe intoxication.
- **Polysubstance use** is when someone uses more than one drug at a time (e.g., alcohol and other drugs). It can mask the effects of alcohol, which can lead to overconsumption.

Health effects

Effects differ for everyone and depend on factors like gender, age, and food intake.



Short term effects

- Impulsive behaviour & aggressiveness
- Impaired judgement & memory
- Slowed reaction time
- Nausea and vomiting
- Injuries
- Blackouts

Long term effects

- Brain development issues
- Heart problems
- Liver and digestive problems
- Cancer (e.g., breast, colon)
- Anxiety and depression
- Infertility



Alcohol laws in Ontario

- Minimum legal drinking age is 19.
- BAC limit is 0.08%, with zero-tolerance for drivers under 21 or G1/G2/M1/M2 license holders.
- It is illegal to sell or supply alcohol to anyone who appears intoxicated.
- Drinking in public places (e.g., parks or streets) is generally prohibited.

References:

[Alcohol | CAMH](#)

[Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health | Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction \(ccsa.ca\)](#)

[Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction \(2022\). Understanding Substance Use: Educator's Guide](#)

[Health risks of alcohol - Canada.ca](#)

Looking for more support with alcohol education for students?

Visit peelregion.ca/business/teachers-educators/healthy-schools/substance-use-prevention-resources or connect with your School Health Nurse.

