



***There is no safe limit for alcohol drinking***

*A Joint Position Statement by the global alcohol research community.*

This Position Statement is supported by:

The International Society for Biomedical Research on Alcoholism ([ISBRA](#)), an official non-State actor of the World Health Organization ([WHO](#))

and, jointly, by its affiliated regional Societies:

The Asia-Pacific Society for Alcohol and Addiction Research ([APSAAR](#))

The European Society for Biomedical Research on Alcoholism ([ESBRA](#))

The Japanese Medical Society for Alcohol and Addiction Studies ([JMSAAS](#))

The Latin American Society for Biomedical Research on Alcoholism ([LASBRA](#))

The Research Society on Alcohol ([RSA](#))

On January 4<sup>th</sup> 2023 The Lancet published a commentary written by WHO representatives<sup>1</sup> to dispel the myth of a safe threshold for minimum alcohol consumption.

The new WHO statement clarifies that it is not possible to define a threshold below which the negative effects of alcohol ‘switch off’ and do not manifest in the human body. A ‘safe’ drinking level, below which the risk of illness or injury simply disappears, does not exist.

Ethanol, the toxic component found in alcoholic beverages, is a Group 1 carcinogen, the highest risk category, alongside tobacco, radiation and asbestos, and has been causally linked to an increased risk of at least seven types of cancers, including common cancers like colon cancer and breast cancer. There is evidence to show that even low-to-moderate alcohol consumption is enough to cause at least half of all alcohol-attributable cancers, and ultimately this means that any amount of ethanol, regardless of the type of beverage, poses a serious health risk.

Previous research may have suggested that low-dose alcohol consumption has a beneficial effect during some cardiovascular disease and type-2 diabetes. But data from scientific studies must always be viewed in the context of the studies themselves, in relation to the specific comparisons and statistical techniques used for the analyses, and as such, no studies have been conducted to date to support the specific claim that the potential benefits of low-dose alcohol consumption outweigh the cancer risk associated with the same levels of alcohol.

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson BO, Berdzuli N, Ilbawi A, Kestel D, Kluge HP, Krech R, Mikkelsen B, Neufeld M, Poznyak V, Rekke D, Slama S, Tello J, Ferreira-Borges C. Health and cancer risks associated with low levels of alcohol consumption. *Lancet Public Health*. 2023 Jan;8(1):e6-e7. doi: 10.1016/S2468-2667(22)00317-6. PMID: 36603913; PMCID: PMC9831798.

In conjunction with the WHO announcement, we do consider that in everyday circumstances alcohol drinking is more nuanced than a simple yes/no phenomenon and develops along a continuum of risk for different drinking patterns and different health conditions. But while it is certainly true that drinking less is safer than drinking more, overall, not drinking remains the safest option compared to any drinking.

In conclusion, based on current evidence, there is no safe limit for alcohol drinking, and we, the global alcohol research community, stand aligned to support this notion as announced by the WHO.

We advocate that alcohol companies should consider improving marketing strategies and customer information accordingly, in relation to the risks of alcohol consumption. Governments, national health agencies and policy makers should improve their efforts to disseminate more information better and more thoroughly regarding the risks of drinking alcohol, also considering the progression of risk linked to different patterns of alcohol drinking and to drinking alcohol in different amounts.

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