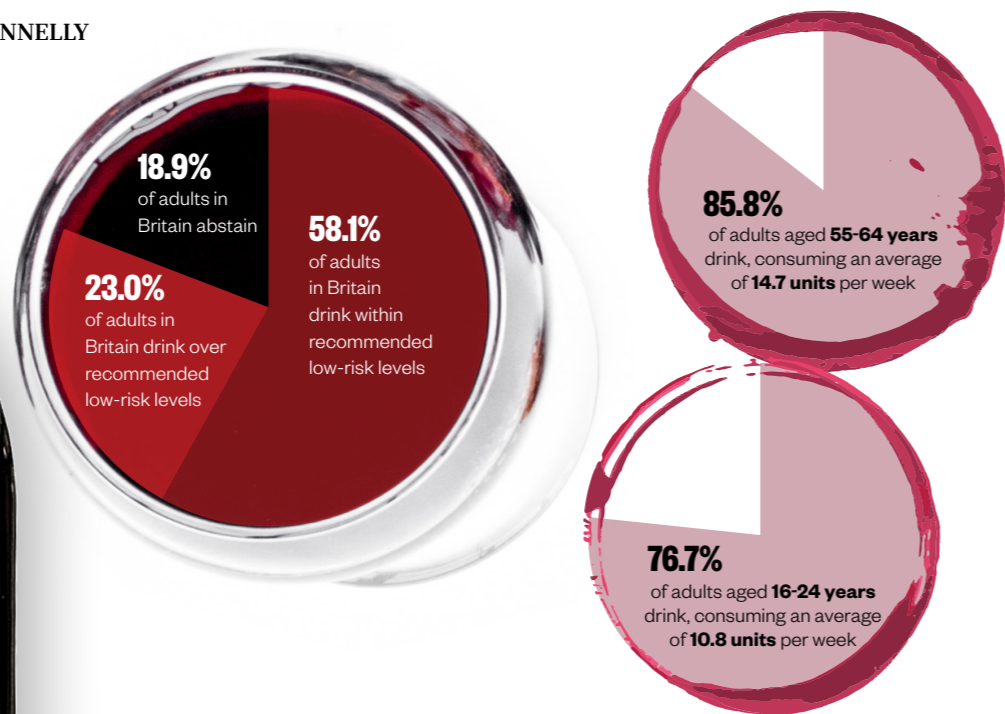


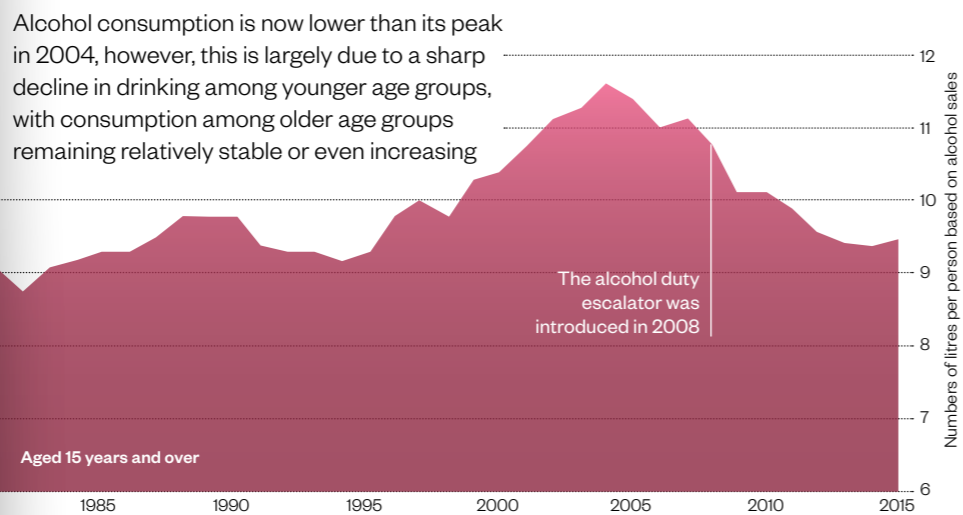
DRINKING ALCOHOL INCREASES CANCER RISK

Drinking alcohol increases the risk of developing cancer, yet only 13% of adults are aware of the link.

DAWN CONNELLY



EVOLUTION OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN THE UK



CURRENT RECOMMENDED LOW-RISK DRINKING LEVELS

The Chief Medical Officers' guidelines were revised on 8 January 2016 and apply to both men and women. To keep health risks from alcohol to a low level:



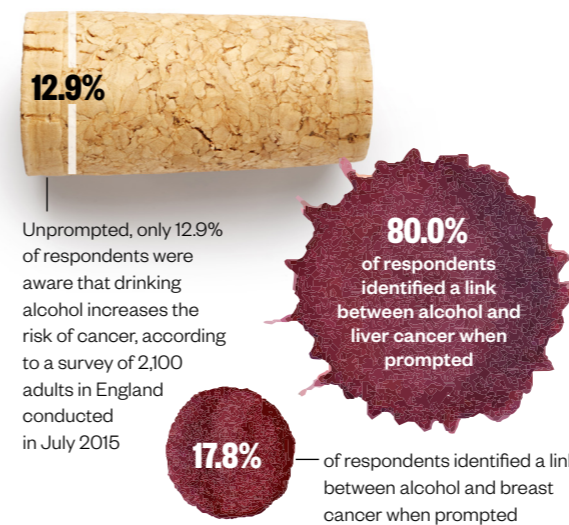
- Do not regularly drink **more than 14 units** per week.
- If you do drink as much as 14 units per week, **spread your drinking evenly** over 3 or more days.
- Having several **drink-free days** each week can help you to cut down.



*Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AND CANCER RISK

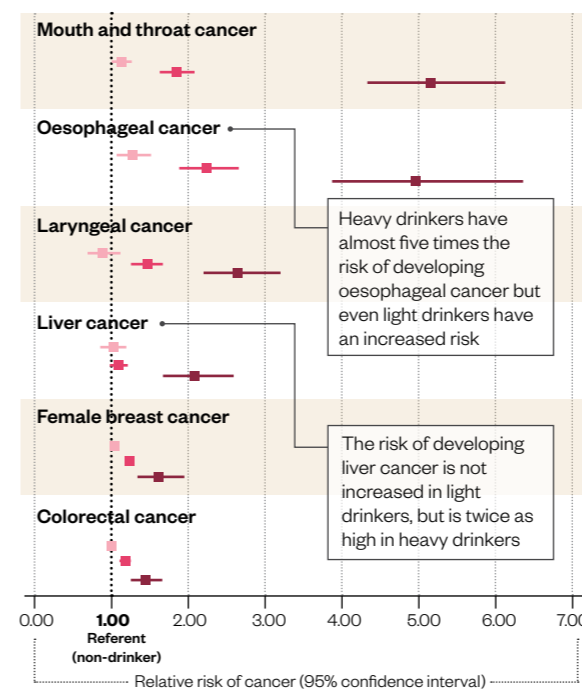
Drinking alcohol increases the risk of seven types of cancer. Between 4%–6% of all new cancers in the UK in 2013 were caused by alcohol consumption. Even drinking small amounts increases the risk of some cancers and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has classified alcohol as a group 1 carcinogen.



Magnitude of risk

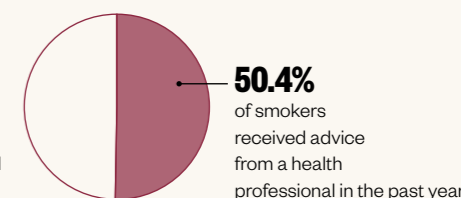
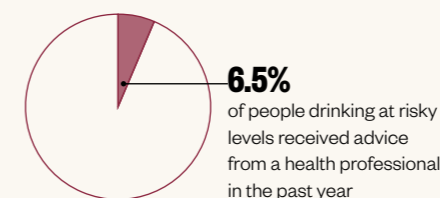
A meta-analysis of over 570 observational studies including almost 500,000 cases calculated relative risks (RR) of site-specific cancer for drinkers compared with non-drinkers and occasional drinkers for various types of cancer.

- Light drinker (10.9 units/week)
- Moderate drinker (10.9 to 43.8 units/week)
- Heavy drinker (>43.8 units/week)



WHAT CAN PHARMACISTS DO?

Some community pharmacies in the UK provide alcohol screening and brief intervention services. However, there is a huge unmet need for interventions.



Alcohol can help other cancer-causing chemicals, for example, tobacco, to more easily enter the cells lining the digestive tract. This is one reason why people who drink and smoke are at much higher risk of cancer

Alcohol can increase the levels of sex hormones, for example, oestrogen, which is thought to be one of the mechanisms by which alcohol increases the risk of breast cancer

Alcohol can impair the absorption of folate. Some studies have found that some cancers are more common in people with low folate levels but it is unclear whether alcohol causes cancer in this way

Estimated annual cancer cases attributable to alcohol in the UK, 2011

When ingested, alcohol is broken down into a toxic chemical called acetaldehyde. This chemical damages the DNA inside cells and stops them from repairing the damage

