HEALTH RISKS OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION:

**Short-term effects**
- Impairment of speech, memory, attention, coordination and balance, and reaction time
- Impaired judgement and decision making
- Sight and hearing are reduced
- Lowered inhibitions and impairment of brain function
- Significant impairments in all driving skills
- Sleepiness can occur
- Emotions and behavior may become exaggerated
- One may experience trouble walking, talking and standing
- Increased risk of belligerence/argumentativeness in some drinkers
- Perceived beneficial effects of alcohol, such as relaxation, give way to increasing intoxication
- As one’s blood alcohol concentration rises, blackouts (amnesia) can occur

**Long-term effects**
Virtually every organ system is affected by alcohol. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the following are long-term effects that can result due alcohol consumption:

**Brain:**
Alcohol can affect the brain at any stage of development. It interferes with the brain’s communication pathways, and can affect the way the brain looks and works. These disruptions can change mood and behavior, and make it harder to think clearly and move with coordination. Long-term, heavy drinking can cause the brain mass to shrink which may affect a range of abilities, such as sleep, cognitive functions (learning and memory), motor coordination, and temperature regulation.

**Heart:**
Drinking a lot over a long time or too much on a single occasion can damage the heart, causing problems including: cardiomyopathy (stretching and dropping of heart muscle); arrhythmias (Irregular heart beat); high blood pressure; stroke. Both binge drinking and long-term heavy drinking can lead to strokes, even in people without coronary heart disease.

**Liver:**
Heavy drinking takes a toll on the liver, and can lead to a variety of problems and liver inflammations including: steatosis (fatty liver); alcoholic hepatitis (dangerous inflammation of the liver); fibrosis (first stage of liver scarring); and cirrhosis (late stage of liver scarring). In addition, alcohol causes the pancreas to produce toxic substances that can eventually lead to pancreatitis, a dangerous inflammation and swelling of the blood vessels in the pancreas that prevents proper digestion.

**Cancer:**
Drinking too much alcohol can increase your risk of developing certain cancers, including cancers of the mouth, esophagus, throat, liver, and breast, and colon

**Immune System:**
Drinking too much can weaken your immune system, making your body a much easier target for disease. Chronic drinkers are more liable to contract diseases like pneumonia and tuberculosis than people who do not drink too much. Drinking a lot on a single occasion slows your body’s ability to ward off infections – even up to 24 hours after getting drunk.
Other Effects of Excessive Alcohol Use:
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, excessive alcohol use (binge drinking and heavy drinking) increases one’s risk for experiencing the following:

- Increased risk of injury to self or others, such as motor vehicle crashes, falls, drownings, and burns.
- Violence, including homicide, suicide, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence.
- Poor decision making: engaging in risky sexual behaviors, including unprotected sex or sex with multiple partners. These behaviors can result in unintended pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.
- Miscarriage and stillbirth or fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs) among pregnant women.
- Mental health problems, including anxiety and depression.
- Social problems, including lost productivity, unemployment and family problems.
- Learning and memory problems, including poor school performance and dementia.
- Alcohol dependence, or alcoholism.

Effects of Overdose:

- Mental confusion
- Stupor, coma, or inability to wake up (unconsciousness)
- Vomiting - if alcohol poisoning goes untreated, one could choke on their own vomit
- Seizures
- Slow breathing (fewer than 8 breaths per minute)
- Irregular breathing (10 seconds or more between breaths)
- Hypoglycemia (too little blood sugar), which leads to seizures
- Hypothermia (low body temperature), bluish skin color, paleness
- Untreated severe dehydration from vomiting
- Permanent brain damage
- Death

Source: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism