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Alcohol 'kills 15 Australians each day', new report finds

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The number of alcohol related deaths has risen by 62 per cent in the last decade. Source: ThinkStock

THE number of deaths caused by alcohol has risen more than 60 per cent over the past decade, a new study shows.

Every day, 15 Australians die and 430 are hospitalised as a result of alcohol misuse, according to the Alcohol's Burden of Disease in Australia report funded by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and VicHealth.

The study by Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre found 5,554 deaths and 157,132 hospitalisations were caused by alcohol in 2010, amounting to a 62 per cent rise in the number of

deaths since the last study was conducted in 2000.

Men were significantly more likely to die or be hospitalised as a result of alcohol misuse than women, accounting for 62.4 per cent of alcohol-related deaths a year, and 64.5 per cent of alcohol-related hospitalisations.

Injuries also accounted for a much greater proportion of alcohol-related deaths in men, at 36 per cent, while cancer and digestive diseases caused 25 and 16 per cent respectively.

Among women, 34 per cent of alcohol-related deaths were due to heart disease, followed by cancers (31 per cent) and injuries (12 per cent).

The results for the Northern Territory — where residents are three times more likely to die from alcohol use than other Australians — were particularly concerning.

Lead researcher Belinda Lloyd said the study made it clear that alcohol posed both short- and long-term risks to health.

“Increasingly people are aware of the risks of things like drink driving and violence,” Dr Lloyd said. “People tend to be less aware of the long-term risks of chronic alcohol consumption, which is any more than two standard drinks a day.

“These can include cancers, digestive diseases and cardiovascular diseases.”