

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

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“Alcohol Increases Risk of At Least Five Cancers”

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) declared alcohol to be a cancer-causing agent (carcinogen) in 1988. However, so-called "responsible drinking" gives one a free pass to drink alcohol in moderation. But there is incriminating data against alcohol consumption, which says that no amount of alcohol is safe, and this is the conclusion of the 2014 World Cancer Report (WCR), issued by the World Health Organization's IARC. It concluded that the more alcohol that a person drinks, the higher the risk. The alcohol/cancer link has been strengthened by the finding of a dose/response relationship between alcohol consumption and certain cancers. And here is the kicker: a causal relationship exists between alcohol consumption and cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, esophagus, colon-rectum, liver, and female breast; a significant relationship also exists between alcohol consumption and pancreatic cancer. Beyond reduced immunity, the short-lived pains of a hangover and increased risk of infection, high levels of alcohol consumption have been scientifically proven to increase the risk of a much more serious disease: cancer. With the stresses of 2020, Americans are heading to the liquor store in huge numbers. During the week ending March 21, 2020 sales of alcoholic beverages shot up 55% compared with the same period in 2019. The greatest risk is for the following five cancers: **Head and Neck Cancers**. Alcohol consumption is a major risk factor for certain head and neck cancers, like those of the oral cavity (excluding the lips), the throat, and the larynx. In fact, having approximately ≥ 3.5 drinks per day can double or triple the likelihood of developing these types of cancer. Even worse, the risk is much higher in people who consume alcohol and use tobacco. **Esophageal Cancer**. Esophageal cancer is common and deadly. The sixth most common cancer worldwide, the disease has a 5-year survival rate of just 47%. **Liver cancer**. Since 1980, the US incidence of liver cancer has tripled while US death rates have more than doubled. **Colorectal Cancer**. Researchers found that people who regularly consumed ≥ 3.5 drinks per day had 1.5 times the risk of developing colorectal cancer compared with nondrinkers or occasional drinkers. Currently, there are more than 1 million colorectal cancer survivors in the United States. And **Breast Cancer**. More than 100 epidemiologic studies have suggested an association between higher levels of alcohol consumption and increased breast cancer risk in women. While breast cancer is the second most common cause of death from cancer in women in the United States, survival rates for breast cancer are excellent. The average 5-year survival rate for women with invasive breast cancer is 91%.

In the America that I love, remember to "think before you drink." Is it worth it?

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