Alcohol Significantly Increases Cancer Risk

Typical Portions of Alcohol Much Larger than Single Serving Sizes

You may think of smoking first when you think of cancer risk, but intake of alcohol also increases risk. In fact, a recent article in the *Journal of the American Public Health Association* estimates that alcohol intake contributed to as many as 21,300 deaths from mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, colon, rectum and female breast cancer in 2009. That is 3.2-3.5% of all cancer deaths.

While cancer experts have known for some time that drinking three or more drinks a day increases cancer risk, this new study found that the majority of these cancers would occur in people who drank as little as one and a half drinks per day or less. This is due to the fact that in the United States this is the amount most people consume. At this time no one knows a safe intake of alcohol when it comes to cancer risk.

The research team also estimates that alcohol-related cancers could shorten a person’s life by 18 years. But what about the benefits of moderate intake of alcohol on cardiovascular disease and diabetes risk? After looking at the data, the researchers concluded that “alcohol results in 10 times as many deaths as it prevents in the United States” even after considering the possible cardiovascular and diabetes prevention benefits.

When it comes to drink servings, one serving equals one 12 ounce beer, 5 ounces of wine or 1 ½ ounces of distilled liquor. Like most food and drink served outside the home, alcoholic beverages have become “super-sized.” It is pretty common for there to be 24 ounce servings of beer, 8 ounce servings of wine and mixed drinks that may have double or triple shots of vodka, tequila, gin or other distilled liquors. Happy hours and “drink specials” promote overconsumption. To lower your cancer risk, drink only occasionally and keep portion sizes to recommended amounts.

Is Your Drink This Size?

12 oz. light beer 1 ½ ounces distilled liquor 5 oz. wine
Fun in the Sun – The Safe Way!

Summer weather is right around the corner, and for most of us that means spending less time indoors and more time outside. While sunlight is good for our health in small doses, harmful UV rays are at their strongest in North America during late spring and early summer months. With skin cancer being the most common form of cancer in the United States, it is important to understand ways to lower your risk of developing it. Here are some steps (as recommended by the CDC) that everyone should take year round, whether it’s cloudy or sunny outside:

- **Seek shade**, particularly during the midday hours (9 am-3pm are the most hazardous hours for UV exposure)

- **Use sunscreen with a SPF of 15 or higher**, that includes both UVA and UVB protection.

  - **Reapply sunscreen** if you stay out in the sun for more than 2 hours, and after you swim or do any activities that make you sweat.

  - **Check the expiration date** - sunscreen has a shelf life of no more than 3 years, but less than that if it’s been exposed to high temperatures.

- **Wear a hat** with a wide brim to shade the face, head, neck, and ears.

- **Wear clothing to protect exposed skin** - loose fitting long sleeved shirts and long pants offer the best protection.

- **Avoid indoor tanning beds!!**