



Celebrating breast cancer awareness

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Breast cancer risk increased by mod

Breast cancer is a feared condition which as reported by [MayoClinic.com](#) is the most common cancer diagnosis. Breast cancer occurs in both men and women, but is far more common in women. The [National Cancer Institute](#) reports that the statistics for deaths from breast cancer in the United States are: New cases: 230,480 (female); 2,140 (male), Deaths: 39,520 (female); 1,140 (male).

There have been reports over the years of studies showing breast cancer risk increased modestly but significantly with alcohol consumption. A recent study at Harvard School of Public Health has supported this finding. Charles C. Scriver, MD, of Harvard Medical School, has written the book ["Drinking Increases Breast Cancer Risk."](#)

In this study women who drank an average of three to six drinks a week had a 15% higher risk of invasive breast cancer compared with nondrinkers. The excess risk for breast cancer increased to 50% in women who drank more than an average of 30 drinks a week. As reported in the November 2 edition of the [Journal of the American Medical Association](#) binge drinking also increased the breast cancer hazard, however the frequency of alcohol consumption did not.

Wendy Y. Chen, MD, of Harvard, and co-authors wrote in their assessment of their findings "We observed an increase in risk with each 10 g per day of alcohol intake. Consistent with other studies, we did not find any difference between type of alcohol beverage." The mechanism for the association between alcohol consumption and breast cancer has not been clear. However, a "probable explanation" is said to relate to alcohol's tendency to increase circulating estrogen levels. The authors have written that this observation is consistent with studies which have shown a stronger influence of alcohol on hormone-dependent breast cancer.

Although some clinicians and scientists have said that this is "old news", David Jernigan, PhD, of the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, has commented that he feels this is an important study. Insofar as terms of counseling women he feels there is now additional evidence showing that, particularly if you have other risk factors, a large amount of drinking over a lifetime increases the risk for breast cancer. Dr. Jernigan's observations are significant at these points in dealing with a link between drinking alcohol and breast cancer risk.

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