

U.S. Surgeon General Issues New Advisory on Link Between Alcohol and Cancer Risk

Alcohol consumption is the third leading preventable cause of cancer in the U.S., but less than half of Americans recognize it as a risk.

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Washington, D.C. – Today [January 3, 2025], United States Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy released a new [Surgeon General's Advisory on Alcohol and Cancer Risk](#), outlining the direct link between alcohol consumption and increased cancer risk. Alcohol consumption is the third leading preventable cause of cancer in the United States, after tobacco and obesity, increasing risk for at least seven types of cancer. While scientific evidence for this connection has been growing over the past four decades, less than half of Americans recognize it as a risk factor for cancer.

The Surgeon General's Advisory includes a series of recommendations to increase awareness to help minimize alcohol-related cancer cases and deaths, including updating the existing Surgeon General's health warning label on alcohol-containing beverages.

"Alcohol is a well-established, preventable cause of cancer responsible for about 100,000 cases of cancer and 20,000 cancer deaths annually in the United States — greater than the 13,500 alcohol-associated traffic crash fatalities per year in the U.S. — yet the majority of Americans are unaware of this risk," said U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy. "This Advisory lays out steps we can all take to increase awareness of alcohol's cancer risk and minimize harm."

The direct link between alcohol consumption and cancer risk is well-established for at least seven types of cancer including cancers of the breast, colorectum, esophagus, liver, mouth (oral cavity), throat (pharynx), and voice box (larynx), regardless of the type of alcohol (e.g., beer, wine, and spirits) that is consumed. For breast cancer specifically, 16.4% of total breast cancer cases are attributable to alcohol consumption.

In the U.S., there are about 100,000 alcohol-related cancer cases and about 20,000 alcohol-related cancer deaths annually. Cancer risk increases as alcohol consumption increases. For certain cancers, like breast, mouth, and throat cancers, evidence shows that the risk of developing cancer may start to increase around one or fewer drinks per day. An individual's risk of developing cancer due to alcohol consumption is determined by a complex interaction of biological, environmental,

social, and economic factors.

In addition to calling for an update on the Surgeon General's health warning label on alcohol-containing beverages to now include cancer risk, the Advisory makes further recommendations. It calls for a reassessment of the guideline limits for alcohol consumption to account for cancer risk, and it advises individuals to be aware of the relationship between alcohol consumption and increased cancer risk when considering whether or how much to drink. Additionally, public health professionals and community groups should highlight alcohol consumption as a leading modifiable cancer risk factor and strengthen and expand education efforts to increase general awareness, and health care providers should inform patients in clinical settings about this link and promote the use of alcohol screening and treatment referrals as needed.

Surgeon General's Advisories are public statements that call the American people's attention to a critical public health issue. Advisories are reserved for significant public health challenges that require the nation's immediate awareness and action. As the Nation's Doctor, the 21st Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. Murthy, has issued Surgeon General's Advisories on [The Mental Health and Well-Being of Parents](#), [Firearm Violence](#), [Loneliness and Isolation](#), [Social Media and Youth Mental Health](#), [Youth Mental Health](#), [Health Worker Well-Being](#), and a [Framework on Workplace Well-Being](#).

You can read the full Advisory [here](#). For more information about the Office of the Surgeon General, please visit www.surgeongeneral.gov/priorities.

[This press release](#) was issued January. 3, 2025, by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.