

Sobering Facts About Alcohol and Cancer

Alcohol consumption is the third leading preventable cause of cancer.

March 10, 2025 By [Trent Straube](#)

“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,” says Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, MD, who released an advisory in January to highlight the link between alcohol and cancer and recommend steps to lower these rates. The advisory urges, for example, that health warning labels on alcohol containers be updated to include cancer risk.

Alcohol consumption—including wine and beer—is the third leading preventable cause of cancer in the United States, after tobacco use and obesity. It’s connected to at least seven types of cancer: breast, colorectal, esophagus, liver, mouth, throat and voice box (larynx). Slightly over 16% of breast cancer cases are linked to alcohol consumption. What’s more, the risk for developing cancer can increase with as little as one drink per day. But this risk, the advisory notes, “is determined by a complex interaction of biological, environmental, social and economic factors.”
