

Cancer researchers in the United Kingdom have concluded that drinking as little as one glass of alcohol a day increases your risk of developing bowel cancer by about 10 percent. The more you drink, the more your risk of that cancer increases. The study included 480,000 people in the UK who were questioned about their level of alcohol intake, with follow-ups over the course of six years. In that period, 1,833 developed colon (end of bowel) cancer, and those who drank more than 30 grams of alcohol per day (less than two pints of strong lager) raised their cancer risk by about 25 percent.

The following is by Dr. Walker, director of Cancer Research in UK.

“While there is increasing evidence that over indulging in alcohol can increase the risk of some cancers, research also shows that by far the biggest risk for life threatening diseases is the combination of smoking together with drinking alcohol.

“There is a lot of confusion over safe drinking levels. However, despite the fact that there are some studies touting “benefits” of drinking small amounts of alcohol, such as wine, I personally do not recommend drinking alcohol. There’s far too much evidence showing that alcohol is seriously detrimental to your health, and suffering before death.

“Alcohol is, in fact, a neurotoxin that can poison your brain. It can also cause a serious disruption of your delicate hormone balance. It is also addictive, so much so that some people can’t control it, so it causes vehicle crashes and road deaths of others, divorces, broken families and friendships, bankruptcies and ruined lives of the victim, and many around them.

“In addition, excessive drinking, just like smoking, may also be the cause of several other cancers, including cancer of the -

- Mouth, larynx, and oesophagus
- Liver and pancreas
- Colon
- Breast
- Lung.”

A previous study on alcohol consumption and breast cancer found that postmenopausal women who drink more than half a glass of alcohol per day, and have low intakes of the B vitamin folate, are 60 percent more likely to develop breast cancer than those who do not drink alcohol and have the highest intake of folate.

Does that mean that you could just eat more vegetables (high in folate) and be safe? While that would provide you with many health benefits, it will not protect you from the toxic effects of alcohol.

Your body breaks down alcohol into a chemical called acetaldehyde, which is responsible for hangover symptoms. When acetaldehyde reacts with the neurotransmitter dopamine, it can cause mental and emotional disturbances such as anxiety, depression and poor concentration. If you look up the toxicology of acetaldehyde, you'll find that it adversely affects many tissues and organs in your body, which may play a large part in increasing the risk of so many chronic diseases and cancers.

Wine does count as alcohol. Most of the benefits from drinking wine are largely related to the polyphenolic bioflavonoids found in the grape skins and seeds. It is not the alcohol or the carbohydrate content that is helpful.

What are alcohol abuse and alcohol dependence?

Alcohol abuse means having unhealthy or dangerous drinking habits, such as drinking every day or drinking too much at a time. Alcohol abuse can harm your relationships, cause you to miss work, and lead to legal problems such as driving while intoxicated. You abuse alcohol when you continue to drink even when your drinking is causing problems to yourself and/or others.

If you continue to abuse alcohol, it can lead to alcohol dependence - also called alcoholism. Some people are physically and/or mentally addicted to alcohol, and have a strong need, or craving, to drink. You feel like you must drink just to get by.

You may be dependent on alcohol if you have one or more of the following problems:

- You cannot quit drinking or control how much you drink.
- You need to drink more to get the same effect.
- You have withdrawal symptoms when you stop drinking. These include feeling sick to your stomach, sweating, shakiness, and anxiety.
- You spend a lot of time drinking and recovering from drinking, or you have given up other activities so you can drink.
- You have tried to quit drinking or to cut back the amount you drink but haven't been able to.
- You continue to drink even though it harms your relationships and causes physical problems.

Alcoholism is a long-term (chronic) disease. It is not a weakness or a lack of willpower. Like many other diseases, it has a course that can be predicted, has known symptoms, and is influenced by your genes and your environment.

How much drinking is too much? Alcohol is part of many people's lives and may have a place in cultural and family traditions. It is sometimes hard to remember when you began drinking too much.

If you, or someone you know, may suffer from alcoholism, Google for an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting near you. These meetings have been the key to overcoming alcoholism for thousands of people around the world.

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