



Medical  
Blueprints

## ALCOHOL AND CANCER RISK REPORT #2996

**BACKGROUND:** Drinking alcohol carries many risks for cancer such as mouth and throat cancer, voice box cancer, esophageal cancer, colon and rectal cancer, liver cancer, and breast cancer in women. The CDC states the risk for cancer decreases the less alcohol you drink. Therefore, it's recommended that adults of legal drinking age can choose not to drink, or to drink in moderation (two drinks or less in a day for men or one drink or less in a day for women). The body breaks alcohol down into a chemical called acetaldehyde. This chemical damages DNA and prevents the body from repairing the damage. DNA is the cell's instruction manual that controls a cell's normal growth and function. When DNA is damaged, a cell can begin growing out of control and create a cancer tumor. In 2021, Gallup reported that 60 percent of U.S. adults drank alcoholic beverages. Approximately 63 percent of men drank alcoholic beverages compared to 57 percent of women, and about 70 percent of those aged 35 to 54 years of age consumed alcohol compared to both younger and older consumers.

(Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/alcohol/index.htm> and <https://extension.psu.edu/alcoholic-beverage-consumption-statistics-and-trends-2022>)

**WARNING SIGNS OF ALCOHOL ABUSE:** There are several warning signs to help detect potential alcohol abuse. The severity of the abuse can play a role in the warning signs a person exhibits. For example, some people try to cover their alcohol abuse by drinking in private and isolating themselves from others. Mild alcohol abuse can be easily overlooked, and what may appear as a minor issue can turn dangerous over time. Some of the most common symptoms of alcohol abuse are experiencing temporary blackouts or short-term memory loss; exhibiting signs of irritability and extreme mood swings; making excuses for drinking such as to relax, deal with stress or feel normal; choosing drinking over other responsibilities and obligations; becoming isolated and distant from friends and family members; drinking alone or in secrecy; feeling hungover when not drinking; and changing appearance and group of acquaintances you hang out with.

(Source: <https://www.alcoholrehabguide.org/alcohol/warning-signs/>)

**NEW THERAPY FOR ALCOHOL USE DISORDER:** Current treatment options for alcohol use disorder (AUD) attempt to change behavior by making alcohol consumption an unpleasant experience, while other options require patients to abstain for several days before beginning treatment. Researchers at UC San Francisco have discovered two new molecules, one of which is currently in clinical oncology trials, to devise a dual-drug therapy for AUD. The results in mice were highly successful. "We could see these side effects in mice who are taking rapamycin or RapaLink-1, and then when you give Rapablock, it's like magic, the side effects are gone," said Dorit Ron, PhD, a professor of neurology and senior author on the study. The researchers say that AUD and other substance abuse disorders are the result of reinforced pathways in the brain, and that those pathways can be blocked or redirected, ending cravings and habitual behavior. "Alcohol use disorder is really a process of maladapted learning and memory," said Ron. She believes that tackling addiction from this neurological perspective has potential for broad applications.

(Source: <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/new-treatment-alcohol-abuse>)

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