

ALCOHOL ADVICE REVISITED

As you cruise into Christmas and kick back, recent health warnings suggest you may want to reconsider how much alcohol you drink.

Alcohol consumption is now a proven cause of cancer, and the belief that it protects against heart disease is misguided, according to a position statement by Cancer Council Australia (CCA).

While it has been known for more than 20 years that regular consumption of alcohol can lead to cancer, we now have specific evidence that it causes cancer of the pharynx, larynx, oesophagus, bowel in men and breast in women. And your level of risk goes up in line with your level of intake.

good for your heart?

CCA has further concluded that the existing evidence does not justify the promotion of drinking alcohol to prevent heart disease. The previously reported role of alcohol in reducing the risk for light-to-moderate drinkers has been overestimated, it says. For example, the misclassification of former drinkers (who may have stopped drinking due to ill health or older age) into the nondrinker group created confusion in the research, which has tended to muddy the waters when interpreting the results.

While some people promote a glass of red wine as good for your heart, the Heart Foundation advises against the consumption of it or other types of alcoholic drinks for the prevention or treatment of heart disease.

what to drink

Controversy may exist about the role of wine for the heart, but CCA advises that the best way to reduce your risk of cancer is to avoid the consumption of alcohol altogether.

There are also smarter ways to avoid the risk of a heart attack that don't increase your risk of getting cancer. These include a healthy diet, exercise, rest and abstinence from smoking.

And you don't have to stand out at a party, because there are many non-alcoholic drink options that look like the real deal. De-alcoholised wine and beer and alcohol-free cider and champagne are available in certain supermarkets and online stores.



Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and co-author of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve wellbeing. See www.sueradd.com for more nutrition information or follow her on Twitter @CulinaryMed.