

the RED CUP Q&A

separating alcohol fact from fiction

wildfact

NIAAA weekly limits:
7 drinks for females, 14 drinks for males

Does alcohol cause cancer?

According to the lyrics by English hipster and singer-songwriter, Joe Jackson: "Everything gives you cancer."

It appears that carcinogens are everywhere - in our food, air, beauty products, and according to the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer, possibly even in our cellphones. YOUCH!

However, according to meta-analysis of over 200 studies compiled by the National Institutes of Health, alcohol itself does not *cause* cancer (i.e., is carcinogenic). YAY!

But don't start celebrating with those Jell-O shots just yet. :(

Those same studies indicate that alcohol still *increases the risk* of cancer, especially for heavy drinkers. Alcohol is linked to cancers of the oral cavity, esophagus, larynx, stomach, colon, rectum, liver, female breast and ovaries. And, The International Agency for Research on Cancer has opposing evidence and classifies alcohol as a Group 1 carcinogen. DOUBLE YOUCH!

Being youthful may make you feel invincible to cancer because it is rare that any of your peers have it. Cancer happens mostly to older people. But, it is important to see the future from the present and understand that actions you choose to take today can have profound effects later on. This is particularly true when it comes to cancer as it may take roughly 20 years or more for a normal cell to go to a clinical diagnosis of cancer.

Even the style of how you drink can have a significant effect. Binge drinking leads to more adverse DNA damage than moderate drinking.

So, what's the take away from today's column? A long life is deserved by all, experienced by most, and shortened for some.

And, just because you drink in college doesn't mean you'll automatically get cancer. But, what we put *in, do* to, and do *for* our bodies can have short and long term consequences whether it involves alcohol, nutrition or sex.

Party on. But party wisely. :)

Got a question about alcohol? Email it to redcup@email.arizona.edu



www.health.arizona.edu



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The Red Cup Q&A is written by Lynn Reyes, LCSW, LISAC, David Salafsky, MPH, Lee Ann Hamilton, MA, CHES, Spencer Gorin, RN, and Christiana Clauson, MPH, in the Health Promotion and Preventive Services (HPPS) department of the UA Campus Health Service.