



## Breast Cancer Risk Raised by Alcohol Consumption, Study Says

By Elizabeth Lopatto



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Sept. 27 (Bloomberg) -- Drinking any kind of alcoholic beverage, even red wine, raises women's risk of developing breast cancer, according to a study from Kaiser Permanente.

What mattered was how much women in the study, more than 70,000, drank a day, said lead author Yan Li, a researcher with health-care provider Kaiser Permanente. Wine, beer and spirits all raised breast cancer risk by 30 percent in women who reported ingesting more than three drinks a day, compared with women who had less than one drink.

Breast cancer affects one in eight women and kills more U.S. women than any form of the disease except lung cancer, according to the National Institutes of Health. One glass of red wine a day has been linked to lower blood pressure. Women who are genetically more likely to have breast cancer, or who have family members who have had the malady, should consider foregoing wine, Li said.

``In terms of abstinence from alcohol, I don't think we can generalize to each individual woman," Li said in a telephone interview on Sept. 25. ``But persistent heavy drinking has been linked to breast cancer."

The women were enrolled in the survey from 1978 to 1985 and filled out surveys regarding lifestyle habits. The researchers reviewed the surveys and patient medical records through 2004. During that time, almost 3,000 women were diagnosed with breast cancer.

### All Alcohol

Li and colleagues analyzed data by preferred beverage type and found all kinds of alcohol raised risk equally.

``We found it made no difference whether women drink wine, instead of beer, or red wine versus white wine," she said. ``It is the alcohol itself."

Alcohol isn't the biggest risk factor for breast cancer, Li said. Genetics, family history and age remain the most important factors for predicting cancer, she said. Other risks include the onset of periods before the age of 12, obesity, hormone replacement therapy, and taking birth control pills, according to the NIH.

The 30 percent increased risk for women who had more than three drinks a day is comparable to the increased risk for women who smoke a pack of cigarettes daily, Li said.

Kaiser Permanente, a not-for-profit health-insurance provider and hospital operator, has its headquarters in Oakland, California.

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