

Campaign Launches to Let Young Women Know Alcohol Causes Breast Cancer

#DrinkLessForYourBreasts urges women to help spread the word about breast cancer risk

Emeryville, CA (February 16, 2020)--Seventy-five percent of women are unaware that drinking alcohol increases their risk of developing breast cancer, yet in the United States, there are approximately 19,000 cases of alcohol-attributable breast cancer each year. The #DrinkLessForYourBreasts initiative—the first of its kind in the U.S.—seeks to bridge this gap through a social media campaign aimed at young women in California.

With an estimated 7% to 16% increase in breast cancer risk attributed to alcohol consumption, the campaign's goals are to let women know that drinking alcohol negatively impacts their breast health and provide useful tools to help women better understand the risk and what alcohol does to their bodies so they can make informed choices.

From a strong body of research conducted over the past 30 years, scientists have demonstrated that alcohol increases breast cancer risk by raising hormone levels which promote tumor development and by releasing chemicals that damage DNA. In 1988, the World Health Organization declared alcohol a carcinogen.

While the campaign's main purpose is to inform, the messages also encourage women to consider their breast health when deciding when and how much to drink. Even reducing their drinking by small amounts, such as taking one night off or replacing a drink with a non-alcoholic beverage, will lower the risk.

“Over time, having just one drink a day will increase your risk,” Principal Investigator and Scientist Priscilla Martinez said. “While there is no single cause of breast cancer and instead multiple factors are at play, including ones that we cannot control like genes, environmental exposures, and physical attributes such as breast density, there are lifestyle decisions that also play a role.

Our campaign is meant to support women, not shame them or blame them. We'd like women to simply know about the risk so they can decide for themselves.”

The campaign, funded by the California Breast Cancer Research Program of the University of California, was developed in collaboration with an advisory panel of state experts and young Californian women who responded to a survey on drinking and their health and participated in a series of virtual focus groups. The campaign launches February 18 and runs for six weeks.

About the Alcohol Research Group

For 60 years, the Alcohol Research Group (ARG) has been actively engaged in critically-needed alcohol- and other drug-related public health research. We study drinking and other drug use and how these and other factors such as gender, race/ethnicity, sexual identity, socioeconomic disparities, and environmental differences affect health. ARG is also home to the NIAAA-funded National Alcohol Research Center and training program. Please visit arg.org for more information.

ARG is a program of the Public Health Institute, an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting health, well-being and quality of life for people throughout California, across the nation and around the world. To learn more, visit www.phi.org.

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Contact

If you are interested in arranging an interview with Priscilla Martinez, PhD, please contact Diane Schmidt, senior communications & development specialist at the Alcohol Research Group at (707) 889-8738 or dschmidt@arg.org.

Campaign website: <https://drinklessforyourbreasts.org/>