Alcohol increases risk for breast cancer

Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death for women in the United States, after lung cancer. Dr. Erica Mayer, a breast cancer expert at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, says there are at least 5 simple ways women can reduce their risk of getting the disease:

1. **Limit alcohol.** Research has shown having too much alcohol can increase your risk of breast cancer. If you choose to drink alcohol—including beer, wine, or liquor—limit yourself to no more than one half to one drink a day on average.
2. **Get a mammogram.** Many health organizations advise women to get regular mammograms starting at age 40. “Mammography screening does not prevent or cure breast cancer, but it may detect the disease before symptoms occur,” said Dr. Mayer.
3. **Eat a healthy diet and keep your weight under control.** The American Cancer Society recommends a diet rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and fiber. “High-fat diets can lead to being overweight or obese, which is a risk factor for breast cancer,” said Dr. Mayer.
4. **Exercise.** There’s growing evidence that physical activity reduces a woman’s breast cancer risk.
5. **Determine if you have family history of breast cancer and be vigilant to early detection.** Twenty to 30% of people who develop breast cancer have a family history of the disease. About 5 to 10% of women carry a BRCA1 or BRCA 2 mutation, the so called “breast cancer genes.”

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