

Mayo Clinic Minute: Alcohol and cancer risk

VIDEO	AUDIO
Dr. Hensrud	"About 100,000 cases of cancer each year in the United States are due to alcohol consumption — and about 20,000 deaths. So this isn't a small problem."
Jason	Mayo Clinic's Dr. Donald Hensrud says alcohol is the third-leading preventable cause of cancer in the U.S., behind tobacco use and obesity.
Donald Hensrud, M.D. Preventive Medicine Mayo Clinic	"The risk starts with actually relatively low intakes of alcohol over a long period of time. Consuming it once in a while probably isn't going to increase the risk that much. But there are many people who consume it regularly, and there are many people who assume that there are health benefits on the heart. And these benefits probably aren't as strong as what we used to believe."
Jason	He says when drinking alcohol is combined with tobacco use, the risk of cancer increases significantly.
Dr. Hensrud	"Some studies have suggested the optimal amount of alcohol for people less than 50 is zero. So we need to dial back, I think, a little bit on our alcohol consumption. Be aware of it. An occasional drink of alcohol is not going to increase long-term risk, but we need to be aware of it and keep a lid on our consumption over time."
Jason	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm Jason Howland.