WELLNESS

9 GOOD REASONS TO BE SOBER CURIOUS

It's one of the biggest rising trends in health, with more people reducing their alcohol intake than ever before. So why should you cut back? Three experts weigh in

THE DERMATOLOGIST

1. YOU'RE MORE LIKELY TO BE RED-FACED

"Alcohol is a vasodilator that exacerbates rosacea, a chronic skin condition that increases

redness that becomes permanent with time," says Adelaide dermatologist Dr Corinne Maiolo. "Interestingly, while red wine is often blamed as a rosacea trigger, a recent study of 82,000 women shows those who consume white wine and liquor are most likely to develop it."

2. YOU'LL INCREASE YOUR MELANOMA RISK

"Alcohol consumption has been linked with an increased risk of skin cancers, and melanoma. This is likely due to alcohol decreasing natural antioxidants and altering immune function, resulting in increased DNA damage suffered by the skin from UV rays. Binge-consumption of alcohol can lead to high-risk behaviours, including sunburns."

3. YOU'LL INCREASE SKIN INFLAMMATION

"Alcohol can make existing skin conditions worse, including psoriasis, discoid eczema and rosacea post-adolescent acne. It can also increase the risk of skin infections. Long-term heavy alcohol use impairs the skin's ability to heal and can lead to visible changes on the skin such as rashes and bruises. It can also interact with skin condition treatments, making them less effective and increase side effects."

THE GP

DR JAMES VANDELEUR

4. YOU'RE MORE LIKELY TO DO SOMETHING YOU'LL REGRET

"Because alcohol is a depressant, it slows your body down and

changes the chemical makeup in your brain," says Dr James Vandeleur, a GP from Infinity Health Medical Centre in Green Square, Sydney. "This alters mood energy levels, sleeping patterns and concentration. It also reduces inhibitions, which can lead to what's been dubbed a 'moral hangover' or regretting saying/doing something the next day."

5. BOOZE DOESN'T MIX WELL WITH ANTIDEPRESSANTS

"Today one in eight Australians are currently on antidepressant medications," says Dr Vandeleur. "Drinking on antidepressants is generally not advised, or if you must have the occasional drink speak to your doctor first. Quite often patients report their tolerance to alcohol is dramatically reduced while drinking and they become tipsy more easily, while others may become dizzy or drowsy."

6. DIFFERENT MEDICATIONS MEAN DIFFERENT RESULTS

"For a type of antidepressants known as monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs), alcohol can raise blood pressure to a dangerous level and should be avoided all together," Dr Vandeleur says. "Blood pressure medications, sleeping pills or painkillers also don't blend well with alcohol and should be avoided or consumed under your doctor's guidance."

THE BREAST CANCER SURGEON DR MARY LING

7. ALCOHOL INCREASES THE RISK OF BREAST CANCER

"Many women are unaware

that one in five breast cancers are linked to alcohol consumption," says breast cancer surgeon Dr Mary Ling from Central Coast, NSW. "Alcohol can increase levels of oestrogen in the body, which is linked to the development of hormone receptor positive breast cancer. Alcohol can also damage DNA in cells and cause cancerous cells to develop."

8. IT INCREASES THE RISK OF OTHER CANCERS, TOO

"There is strong evidence that alcohol increases the risk of at least six other types of cancer, including mouth, pharynx (upper throat), larynx (voice box), oesophagus, liver and bowel," says Dr Ling. "When it comes to cancer, there is no 'safe' level of alcohol use. However, if you choose to drink, new guidelines have recommended no more than 10 standard drinks in one week."

9. ALCOHOL AND HRT DON'T MIX WELL

"Research has shown that women who regularly drink alcohol while taking HRT (hormone replacement therapy) have a much higher risk of breast cancer, and this increase in risk is higher than it would be by drinking alcohol alone or taking HRT alone," Dr Ling reveals. "It's possible that the extra oestrogen from drinking combined with the oestrogen in HRT results in the increased risk."



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SOBER CURIOUS STARS

JENNIFER LOPEZ

J.Lo steers clear of alcohol and caffeine. "Of course, during celebratory toasts, everybody's like, 'You can't toast with water!' So I'll toast with alcohol and just take a sip," she says.



NATALIE PORTMAN

Portman says she experimented with alcohol

during college, but she's now given up drinking altogether.

ANNE HATHWAY

The actress is taking a break from drinking because of the after-effects. "My last hangover lasted for five days."

KIM KARDASHIAN

The reality TV star does drink sometimes, however, she saves

however, she saves booze for special occasions like holidays to Vegas.

