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has the highest rate of alcohol-related cancers in the midwest

BY AMBER SMITH

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In a groundbreaking advisory released, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, MD issued a stark warning about the connection between alcohol consumption and cancer, urging Americans to reconsider their drinking habits considering emerging scientific evidence.

This marks a pivotal moment in public health, with the Surgeon General emphasizing that no level of alcohol consumption is safe when it comes to cancer risk.

The Surgeon General's Advisory includes a series of recommendations to increase awareness to help minimize alcohol-related cancer cases and deaths, including updating the existing Surgeon General's health warning label on alcohol-containing beverages.

The 2025 advisory, titled "Alcohol Use and Cancer: A Public Health Crisis," draws on a growing body of research linking alcohol to a range of cancers, including breast, liver, colorectal, and mouth cancer.

The Surgeon General's Office has underscored that alcohol is now recognized as a definitive cause of cancer, with even moderate drinking increasing the risk of developing these life-threatening diseases.

The direct link between alcohol consumption and cancer risk is well-established for at least seven types of cancer including cancers of the breast, colorectum, esophagus, liver,

mouth (oral cavity), throat (pharynx), and voice box (larynx), regardless of the type of alcohol (e.g., beer, wine, and spirits) that is consumed.

In the U.S., there are about 100,000 alcohol-related cancer cases and about 20,000 alcohol-related cancer deaths annually. Cancer risk increases as alcohol consumption increases.

For certain cancers, like breast, mouth, and throat cancers, evidence shows that the risk of developing cancer may start to increase around one or fewer drinks per day.

An individual's risk of developing cancer due to alcohol consumption is determined by a complex interaction of biological, environmental, social, and economic factors.

The Surgeon General's advisory highlights the potential harms of

binge drinking and heavy drinking, emphasizing that the cumulative effect of alcohol use over time can dramatically increase cancer risks.

Iowa ranks number four in the nation for binge drinking. When collecting community survey responses, twenty-three percent of Clinton residents reported excessive drinking.

Local statistics show that thirty percent of motor vehicle crash deaths in Clinton County involved alcohol.

In order to combat binge and heavy drinking in Clinton County, the Clinton Substance Abuse Council was awarded the Partnerships For Success Preventing Alcohol Misuse grant from Iowa HHS and SAMHSA. The availability of alcohol at community events (fairs, concerts, sporting events, etc.)

increases convenient and public access to alcohol.

Convenient access to alcohol is associated with an increase in alcohol-related problems. Alcohol restrictions at community events can range from a total ban on alcohol consumption to posting warning signs that detail the risks associated with consuming alcohol. It's important to note that research shows that the greater the number of alcohol control policies in place, the less the likelihood of alcohol sales to underage customers and over-consumption.

For now, the Surgeon General's message is clear: when it comes to alcohol and cancer, the most effective strategy is prevention.

To learn more visit www.csaciowa.org/adult-alcohol-use or you can contact Amber Smith at the Clinton Substance Abuse Council at 563-241-4371.

RESOURCES:

■ U.S. Surgeon General Advisory, "Alcohol and Cancer Risk 2025" <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/alcohol-cancer/index.html>

■ 2023 Clinton County Community Readiness Surveys

■ 2024 Iowa Cancer Registry <https://shri.public-health.uiowa.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/cancer-in-iowa-2024.pdf>

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