

Ohio State Study Targets Alcohol Marketing That Downplays Breast Cancer Risk

COLUMBUS, OH, UNITED STATES, May 21, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Key takeaways:

- Alcohol increases breast cancer risk, but many young women don't know it.
- [Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer](#) – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute researchers are testing whether plain-language posts about the connection can improve awareness.
- The goal is to help people make informed choices and, for some, drink less.



Memorial Day weekend, the unofficial start of summer, is a peak holiday for alcohol consumption, with nearly half of celebrants [reporting](#) they plan to buy alcoholic beverages. Public health experts are raising concern that only about 28% of people are [aware that regular alcohol consumption](#) increases risk for at least seven forms of cancer (<https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/alcohol-cancer/index.html>).

A new study (<https://clinicaltrials.gov/study/NCT07320664>) at The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute (OSUCCC – James) seeks to raise awareness of alcohol as a risk factor for cancer specifically among young women.

“If people don’t know alcohol is linked to breast cancer risk, they can’t weigh that risk when they make choices,” said Darren Mays, MD, PhD (<https://cancer.osu.edu/find-a-researcher/search-researcher-directory/darren-mays-100003272>), the study’s lead author and behavioral scientist with the OSUCCC – James. “We’re building messages with young women, then testing whether those messages can improve what people know and help reduce drinking as a long-term strategy for cancer prevention.”

How the study works

First, OSUCCC – James researchers held focus groups with women ages 18 to 25 at five research

centers in the Big Ten Cancer Research Consortium (<https://bigtencrc.org/>). The groups helped create plain language, relatable messages about drinking alcohol and breast cancer risk. During the sessions, the researchers used artificial intelligence to generate and compare message concepts before refining the strongest options through additional testing.

Now they are testing these messages in a study of up to 500 young women as part of what researchers say is a first-of-its kind behavioral health study. Participants are randomly assigned to one of two groups to receive either countermarketing messages about alcohol and breast cancer risk or cancer prevention messages unrelated to alcohol. Participants then complete daily smartphone surveys about their alcohol use, and some will wear a sensor that detects drinking. The study does not include cancer screening or diagnosis.

"This is prevention research. We're testing whether better information, delivered in the right places, can help people make informed choices and drink less," said Mays who also conducts tobacco prevention research through the OSUCCC – James Center for Tobacco Research and serves as a professor at Ohio State's College of Medicine.

"We learned a lot from tobacco prevention. When messages explain health risks and call out deceptive marketing, they can change what people believe. We want to see whether that can work for alcohol and breast cancer prevention, too," he said.

Timing is especially critical given that a new national survey commissioned on behalf of the OSUCCC - James found that only 13% of women recognize regular alcohol consumption as a cancer risk.

"It's a good reminder to be more proactive, whether that's having a conversation with your doctor about your risk factors such as drinking, talking through your family history, or asking if it's time to get screened," said Mays.

How to participate or learn more

To learn more about how to participate in this study, women ages 18-25 who drink alcohol can visit B-Track Study | OSUCCC — James (<https://cancer.osu.edu/for-cancer-researchers/research/research-labs/mays-lab/current-studies/b-track-study>) or call 614-401-6091. To learn more about breast cancer risk, screening and treatment, visit cancer.osu.edu/breastcancer (<https://cancer.osu.edu/for-patients-and-caregivers/learn-about-cancers-and-treatments/cancers-conditions-and-treatment/cancer-types/breast-cancer>). This study is funded by the Breast Cancer Research Foundation.

Survey methodology

This study gauging awareness of alcohol as a risk factor for breast cancer was conducted by SSRS on its Opinion Panel Omnibus platform. The SSRS Opinion Panel Omnibus is a national, twice-

per-month, probability-based survey. Data collection was conducted from April 2-6, 2026, among a sample of 1,043 female respondents. The survey was conducted via web (n=1,014) and telephone (n=29) and administered in English. The margin of error for total respondents is +/-3.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The Opinion Panel Omnibus data were weighted to represent the target population of U.S. female adults ages 18 or older.

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