

## ***Binge drinking as a teenager 'increases risk of breast cancer'***

The Telegraph

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Girls and young women who drink alcohol most days are five times more likely to develop benign breast disease, researchers say.

This in turn can increase their risk of developing breast cancer.

Binge drinking among adolescent girls has increased dramatically and in some parts of the country girls aged between 11 and 15 are now consuming up to a bottle and a half of wine a week – more than is safe for an adult woman.

Excessive alcohol consumption is known to increase the risk of breast cancer in adult women and it has been estimated that 600 women in England die from breast cancer caused by their drinking each year.

Now research from America has found that drinking at an early age increases the risk of benign breast disease.

Girls who drank on six or seven days a week were more than five times more likely to develop benign breast disease, which includes lumps that are not cancerous, cysts or a skin or nipple problem. Some forms of the condition can increase the risk of breast cancer later in life.

The team, based at Washington University School of Medicine in St Louis and Harvard University, studied nearly 7000 girls and analysed their alcohol consumption.

Initial research was conducted between the ages of nine and 15.

Dr Graham Colditz said: "Our study clearly showed that the risk of benign breast disease increased with the amount of alcohol consumed in this age group.

"The study is an indication that alcohol should be limited in adolescence and early adult years and further focuses our attention on these years as key to preventing breast cancer later in life."

The study was published in the May issue of *Paediatrics*.

Girls and young women who drank six or seven days a week were 5.5 times more likely to have benign breast disease than those who didn't drink or who had less than one drink per week.

Participants who reported drinking three to five days per week had three times the risk.

The participants who were diagnosed with benign breast disease on average drank more often, drank more on each occasion and had an average daily consumption that was two times that of those who did not have benign breast disease.

They also had more episodes of binge drinking.

Dr Colditz said: "We know from many other studies of adult women that alcohol intake later in life increases breast cancer risk.

"But many women begin drinking alcohol as adolescents right at the time in which breast tissue is going through stages of rapid proliferation.

"So we wanted to see if the effect of alcohol on breast cancer risk was operative in this younger group."

In other research, it was found that girls who are thinner than average at age seven were more likely to develop breast cancer after they went through the menopause.

The study of 5,000 girls from Sweden was published in the journal Breast Cancer Research.

The findings were surprising because being overweight and going through puberty early are already known to increase the risk of breast cancer and the authors from the Karolinska Institute said the results were 'counter-intuitive'.

However they added that using bodysize at age seven to help identify the risk individuals may be at later in life would be relatively easy as most people have photographs of themselves at that age.