

Transcript Details

This is a transcript of an educational program. Details about the program and additional media formats for the program are accessible by visiting: <https://reachmd.com/programs/covid-19-frontlines/key-strategies-to-maintain-breast-health-amid-the-covid-19-pandemic/11847/>

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Key Strategies to Maintain Breast Health Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

Announcer:

This is ReachMD, and you're listening to *COVID-19: On The Frontlines*. Taken from a live webinar sponsored by Penn Medicine, this program features Dr. Ann Steiner, Clinical Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Penn Medicine. Dr. Steiner reviews some key strategies to help patients maintain their breast health amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Here is Dr. Steiner now.

Dr. Steiner:

One that really got my attention is that I saw there's been a 55% increase in alcohol sales across the United States in the month of March. So people are staying at home, they are stressed, they are increasingly isolated, and they may be self-medicating. I think we've all enjoyed a glass of wine with dinner, but maybe some people more than that. So we know that women who don't drink compared to those who have 3 drinks a week have about a 15% increased risk of breast cancer, and this goes up by about 10% for every additional alcoholic beverage added per day. There is a dose-related response to alcohol intake even with very low amounts of alcohol consumed, so even 1 to 3 drinks a week can increase your risk ratio of breast cancer by 1.5. And even looking back at the Women's Health Initiative, a study which is near and dear to all gynecologists, they did look at over 38,000 women and their alcohol intake, and they did see a modest increase in breast cancer, and it wasn't associated with whether or not the breast cancers were estrogen receptor-positive or negative. It was pretty much across the board. So, until this point, about 2% of breast cancers in the United States were felt to be attributable to alcohol. In Italy, where more alcohol is consumed prior to COVID—maybe even more after—about 11% according to their data of breast cancers are associated with alcohol use. So I think this is probably, of all the modifiable risk factors, the one that we really need to keep an eye on for breast health.

But the other one goes back to the "Lockdown 15" and gaining weight, and there's pretty good data that in postmenopausal women who have a body mass index greater than 30 who are considered obese, that there is an increased risk of breast cancer, and it's associated with increasing BMI, but even—and, Julia, you can speak to this if it's appropriate—there is a 5% absolute increased risk in mortality in women who are obese and have breast cancer, so it actually affects their survival.

So these are, of all the modifiable risks, the 2 that I think that women can keep in mind while they're sheltering at home.

Announcer:

That was Dr. Ann Steiner from Penn Medicine. To access more episodes from *COVID-19: On The Frontlines* and to add your perspectives toward the fight against this global pandemic, visit us at ReachMD.com and Become Part of the Knowledge. Thank you for listening.