# "I plan to shout about the link between alcohol and breast cancer ... it might save a life"

Since February 2022, I’ve battled breast cancer. I’d never joined the dots between this and my background of heavy drinking until I was undergoing chemotherapy and threw myself into the research.

I’m well aware that my alcohol consumption when I was drinking would not have fit into [Australia’s Alcohol Guidelines](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/alcohol). I am an alcoholic in recovery and I’ve now been sober for eight years.

Eighteen months ago, I went for a routine mammogram, which was then followed by a whirlwind of 12 biopsies. I was swiftly diagnosed with Stage 2B breast cancer, which had already spread to my lymph nodes. I embarked on a six-month course of chemotherapy – 16 cycles – followed by major surgeries.

I didn’t know then that, according to World Health Organization (WHO), alcohol is one of the biggest risk factors for breast cancer.

Neither did I know that up to one in 10 cases of breast cancer in Australia is linked to drinking alcohol, according to the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP).

**It took doing this research for me to find that it doesn’t matter what type of alcohol, what quality or what price - it’s all connected to increased risk of cancer.**

And when I found that out, I thought of the young women I had seen on the chemo ward at Gold Coast University Hospital. I have no idea if they drank alcohol, but I couldn’t help but wonder.

The uncomfortable truth is that alcohol is classified as a Group 1 carcinogen by the IARC (International Agency for Research on Cancer). This is the same classification as tobacco smoke, radiation and asbestos. Yes, asbestos – please let that sink in.

The second uncomfortable fact is that alcohol is understood to be linked to seven types of cancer – breast, mouth, throat, oesophagus, liver, larynx and colorectum. Most people aren’t aware of this connection.

Doesn’t this sound like something we should be talking about more?

One day, I hope alcohol – much like tobacco – will be understood as the dangerous, toxic substance it is.

I can’t know if this knowledge would have changed my drinking when I was younger. But I do believe we need to be armed with the facts. Now, I plan to shout about the link between alcohol and breast cancer with all my might.

Because it might just save a life.

*We regularly share stories like Corrine's.*[*Sign up*](https://fare.org.au/voicesofchange/) *to receive these stories by email, or to share your own experiences with alcohol through our Voices of Change project.*