

The US Surgeon General, Vivek Murthy, on 3rd Jan. 2025, issued a new warning about alcohol and its link to cancer. In his advisory, Murthy explained that alcohol consumption raises the risk of at least seven types of cancer, including those of the breast, liver, mouth, and throat.

He stressed that the risk remains the same, regardless of the type of alcohol consumed. "Alcohol is a preventable cause of cancer," Murthy said. "It leads to about 100,000 cases and 20,000 deaths each year in the United States. That's more than alcohol-related traffic fatalities."

Yet, many Americans remain unaware of these dangers. To raise awareness, Murthy suggested putting warning labels on alcoholic drinks, similar to those on cigarette packs. He also recommended revisiting current alcohol guidelines so people can make informed decisions about their drinking habits.

Even moderate drinking can increase the risk of certain cancers. Murthy noted that factors like a person's genes and environment also play a role. The current guidelines recommend that men limit themselves to two drinks a day, and women to one. But the World Health Organization (WHO) says no amount of alcohol is completely safe.

Rwanda Launches Campaign to Curb Alcohol Use

Meanwhile, Rwanda is taking action to tackle rising alcohol use, especially among its youth. The government launched the "TunyweLess" campaign to raise awareness of alcohol's health risks and reduce excessive drinking.

A 2022 survey from the Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC) showed a sharp rise in alcohol consumption. In just nine years, the percentage of people who drink alcohol went from 41% to 48%. Young people are particularly at risk. Alcohol use is often linked to mental health struggles and risky behaviors.

The campaign features a powerful video with Health Minister Dr. Sabin Nsanzimana. In it, he warns young people about the dangers of alcohol. "Alcohol ruins your life and leads to diseases like cancer, diabetes, and heart disease," he says. "Do you think drinking will have no effect on your health?"

The RBC survey also revealed that men drink more than women. In fact, 61.9% of men drink alcohol, compared to 34.3% of women. The Western province of Rwanda

has the highest rates of heavy drinking. Though binge drinking has declined, the overall rise in alcohol use is worrying.

Rwanda is also facing a growing problem with youth using alcohol and cannabis. Some start as young as 13 years old. These behaviors often lead to unprotected sex and other health risks.

Rwanda's government is working to reverse these trends. Dr. Nsanzimana stressed the need for a national effort to combat alcohol and drug abuse, especially since it contributes to diseases like cancer and mental health issues.

A personal story shared by a young woman from Bugesera district highlights the consequences of early exposure to alcohol and drugs. She turned to substances after facing family struggles, leading to a diagnosis of HIV. But after entering rehab, she began her recovery. Now, she advocates for stronger family support and communication to keep young people away from drugs and alcohol.

The "TunyweLess" campaign uses social media and other platforms to spread its message. It aims to engage families and communities to make healthier choices and reduce alcohol-related diseases.

Rwanda's efforts align with a broader public health push, as President Paul Kagame emphasized during his Liberation Day speech. He encouraged citizens to make thoughtful dietary choices and avoid harmful substances, promoting a healthier future for the country.