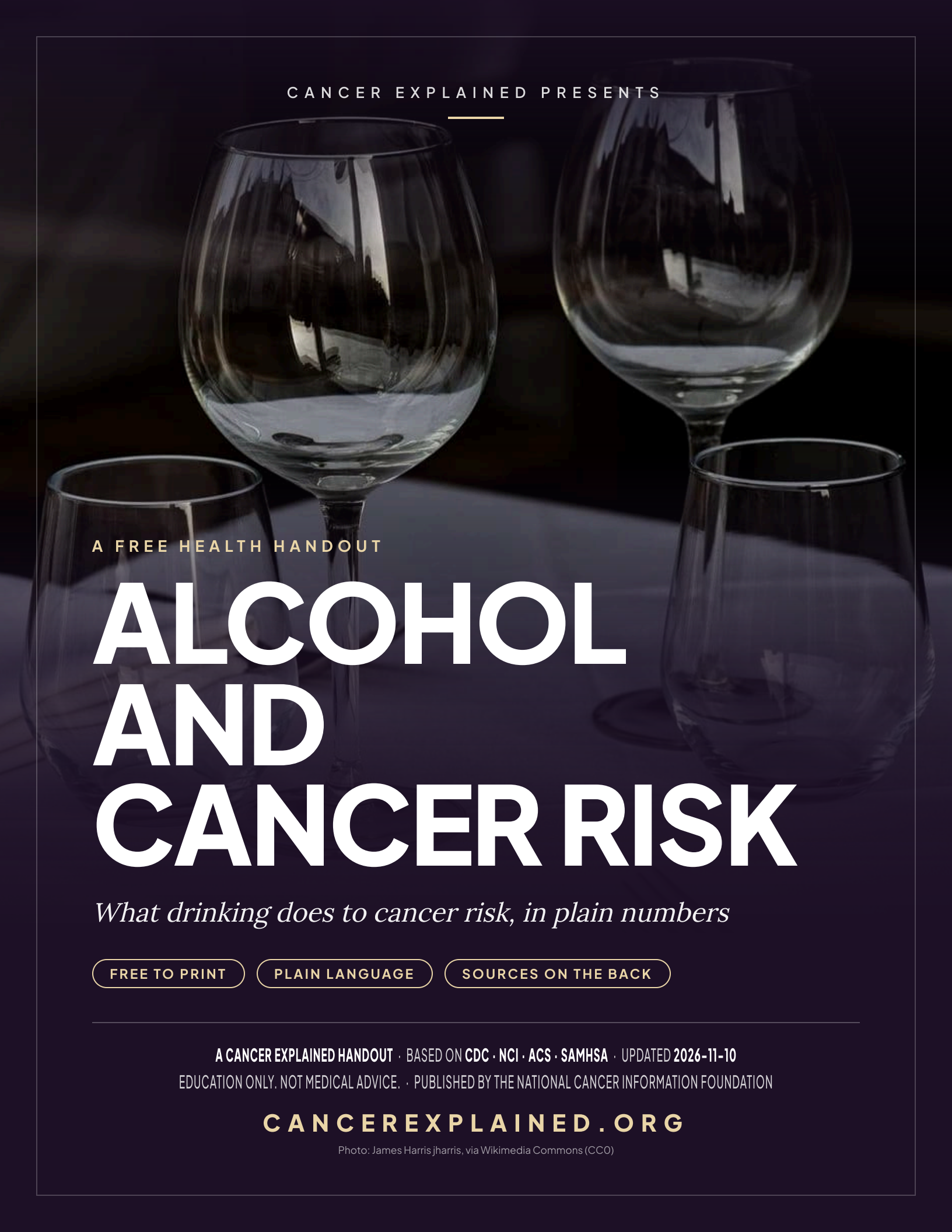


CANCER EXPLAINED PRESENTS

A FREE HEALTH HANDOUT

ALCOHOL AND CANCER RISK

What drinking does to cancer risk, in plain numbers

FREE TO PRINT · PLAIN LANGUAGE · SOURCES ON THE BACK

A CANCER EXPLAINED HANDOUT · BASED ON **CDC · NCI · ACS · SAMHSA** · UPDATED **2026-11-10**
EDUCATION ONLY. NOT MEDICAL ADVICE. · PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL CANCER INFORMATION FOUNDATION

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Alcohol and Cancer Risk

What drinking does to cancer risk, in plain numbers

cancer explained.org

1 The link

- [ ] CDC says drinking alcohol raises the risk of cancers of the mouth, throat, voice box, esophagus, colon and rectum, liver, and breast (in women).
- [ ] All drinks count: beer, wine, and liquor.
- [ ] The more you drink, the higher the risk. The less you drink, the lower the risk.
- [ ] Drinking and smoking together raise the risk of mouth and throat cancers more than either one alone.

2 What counts as one drink

- [ ] 12 ounces of regular beer.
- [ ] 5 ounces of wine.
- [ ] 1.5 ounces of liquor, such as vodka, whiskey, or rum.

3 What the guidance says

- [ ] The American Cancer Society says it is best not to drink alcohol.
- [ ] For people who choose to drink, ACS says no more than 1 drink a day for women and 2 for men.
- [ ] Do not drink at all if you are pregnant or might be.

4 If you want to cut back

- [ ] Pick alcohol-free days each week and write them down.
- [ ] Keep a count of drinks for two weeks. Many people are surprised by the total.
- [ ] Ask your doctor for help. It is a medical question, and they are asked it often.
- [ ] Free, private help at any hour: SAMHSA's National Helpline, 1–800–662–4357.

THE BOTTOM LINE

For cancer risk, less alcohol is better and none is best. Any step down counts.

Sources: CDC: Alcohol and cancer (cdc.gov/cancer/risk-factors/alcohol.html) · CDC: Standard drink sizes (cdc.gov/alcohol/standard-drink-sizes/index.html) · NCI: Alcohol and cancer risk (cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/alcohol/alcohol-fact-sheet) · ACS: Guideline for diet and physical activity (cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity/acs-guidelines-nutrition-physical-activity-cancer-prevention.html) · SAMHSA: National Helpline (samhsa.gov/find-help/helplines/national-helpline)

Learn more in plain language: cancerexplained.org/essentials/weight-alcohol-and-food · **Updated:** 2026-11-10

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