

## The RAMble Report - April 2022

Dr. Suzie Park, who practices primary care medicine for women at Stony Point Medical Center, was the guest speaker for the RAMble on a beautiful April morning. Dr. Park has spent 20 years practicing medicine and one of the most enjoyable aspects of being a doctor is developing relationships with patients and empowering them to make healthy choices in areas such as physical activity, tobacco cessation, healthy weight, sleep and alcohol use.

While each of these are important to our health, there are several that are crucial when it comes to heart health and cancer prevention. During the past year, she's seen many patients that had not had appointments with her for over two years, mostly due to the pandemic. One of the things she's discovered is that alcohol use has increased: Patients are drinking more than they had prior to the pandemic, she noted. These conversations have given her the opportunity to talk with her patients about the role of alcohol use in cardiovascular disease and cancer prevention.

Dr. Park reviewed three topics:

- Is there an acceptable amount of alcohol use?
- What is the impact on heart health and disease?
- What is the effect of alcohol on cancer risk?

The thought is 12 ounces beer, or 5 ounces of wine, or 1 ½ ounces of liquor is an acceptable amount to consume. However, for women and men there are different "acceptable amounts." For women, it's 1 drink per day or 7 per week – but not over 3 drinks a day. For men – it's the same if they are over 65, but if they're younger, it's twice that amount.

Even though we may have heard the adage "A class of red wine each day is good for your heart," there's actually no scientific data that supports that. The medical community is beginning to question that, however, despite the known fact that the skin of grapes have antioxidant properties, which have been associated with cancer prevention. She asked that if you aren't in the habit of drinking alcohol, think before you start!

It's quite clear that alcohol does increase your risk of being diagnosed with certain types of cancer, especially gastrointestinal, head and neck, breast cancers. Even 3-6 glasses a week could increase your risk of developing breast cancer, said Dr. Park. The thought with cancer is, she stated, drink less while the best is to drink none.

Life is about moderation, she explained. Don't feel guilty if there's a celebration and you're toasting an event! Remember that alcohol is a toxin, and to drink less is of benefit for cancer prevention.