

The health effects of alcohol

Find out about the health effects of alcohol, whether it's better to drink moderately or abstain, and which type of alcohol is the best to drink.

Is alcohol healthy or harmful?



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A drink a day keeps the doctor away?

Research extending back as far as 1926 when Dr. Raymond Pearl published his book *Alcohol and Longevity* has demonstrated that drinking in moderation is associated with a longer life span than is either abstaining or abusing alcohol. One possible explanation is the effect of alcohol on cardiovascular disease. Moderate consumption increases your level of "**good cholesterol**" (HDL), clot-dissolving capacity, coronary blood

flow, and insulin sensitivity while decreasing blood clotting and fibrinogen (a blood-clotting compound) and artery spasms related to stress, all of which are good for heart health. Moreover, studies have found the risk of **Alzheimer's disease** to be as much as 75 per cent lower among drinkers, whether they drank more or less than the limits recommended by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), leading researchers to conclude that moderate alcohol consumption may be protective.

**Moderate drinkers
live longer
than both
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overconsumers.**

Defining a drink as one 12-ounce beer, 4 ounces of wine, 1.5 ounces of 80-proof liquor, or 1 ounce of 100-proof liquor, In other words, moderate drinkers live longer than both abstainers and overconsumers, a finding backed by research in various other countries as well. The benefits are found in both middle-aged and older men and women, but are rapidly lost when too much alcohol is drunk on a daily basis. Make sure to limit yourself to one (for women) or two (for men) drink a day.

Beer, wine, whiskey and more: Which is best for your health?

The push during the last decade was to drink wine, particularly the red variety, to obtain the greatest health benefits. Recent studies on lower risk of heart disease, however, provide strong evidence that **all alcoholic drinks are equivalently beneficial to cardiovascular health**. Thus, it appears that a substantial portion of the benefit is from alcohol rather than other components or each type of drink. But you can't rule them out completely. For instance, red wine, especially when made from grapes grown in colder climates, offers even greater cardiovascular protection, likely due to its content of polyphenols contained in grape skin.