

A Drink a Day Keeps the Doctor Away

Research shows that healthy individuals who drink moderately are 40-60% less likely to suffer a heart attack than their peers who do not drink at all



By Alexandra Lupu, Health News Editor

24th of October 2006, 10:45 GMT

It is not a breakthrough discovery the fact that moderate drinking is very beneficial for one's health, but various previous studies led on the subject failed to investigate whether a drink or two daily are responsible for preventing a wide range of health problems or the whole lifestyle of the individual, including diet, exercising, not smoking, watching their weight etc.

However, a team of researchers at the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard School of Public Health have recently analyzed how important moderate drinking is in keeping disorders at bay, independent of other lifestyle factors. For this,

researchers at the two institutes used data on more than 8,867 men, which scientists have obtained from the Health Professionals Follow-up Study. All the men who were investigated in the current research were healthy individuals with normal body weights, who exercised regularly, did not smoke and had healthy eating habits and diet.

Lead author of the research Kenneth Mukamal, MD, MPH, Internist at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC) and Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School commented on the team's study: "This latest research speaks to how robust the link is between moderate drinking and heart attack risk. The fact that we found the association between alcohol consumption and heart attack to be just as strong in this tightly controlled group of men as we've found it to be in more general studies suggests that physicians should not avoid alcohol consumption as a topic for discussion when talking with patients about ways to reduce their risk of myocardial infarction."

Overall results of the 16 year follow-up study showed that individuals who maintained all the healthy habits and drank moderate amounts of alcohol (spirits, wine, beer) had 40% to 60% chances of avoiding a heart attack as compared to their counterparts who also stuck to all healthy habits but did not consume alcoholic drinks at all.

Dr. Mukamal concluded that medical experts and scientists worldwide should focus more on the health benefits of moderate drinking in preventing heart attacks and other health problems: "Based on these numbers, we estimate that approximately 25 percent of the heart attacks that occurred among these healthy individuals might be attributed to abstention or extremely light drinking. The medical community has often dismissed moderate drinking out of hand without really considering the evidence on its merits alone. One of the goals of this research was to focus conversation on the actual risks and benefits of moderate drinking itself. We hope this is one step in initiating that discussion."