

DID YOU KNOW?

Health Risks and Alcohol (also see “Women”)

Pros and Cons of Alcohol Use re. Health Outcomes

Pros and Cons of Alcohol Use re. Health Outcomes – edited by NLH

Pros: Alcohol may reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, heart attack, and ischemic stroke by relaxing blood vessels and boosting levels of HDL (good) cholesterol, [but at the same time the thinning of the blood caused by alcohol consumption can cause hemorrhagic stroke]. A compound found in red wine [**and grapes**] called resveratrol can improve blood flow and prevent LDL (bad) cholesterol from damaging arteries. Moderate consumption of alcohol (one glass per day for women and two for men) may be associated with a reduced risk of type 2 diabetes, [but people with Diabetes are urged NOT to drink in order to avoid raising blood sugar, and moderate consumption is shown to cause multiple serious health consequences].

Cons: Alcohol can increase blood pressure and triglycerides and should be avoided by diabetics and those with liver disease, including hepatitis. It may also **cause coronary heart disease** at the level of two drinks per day, and increases the risk for **hypertensive heart disease**. It also exacerbates heartburn and acid reflux and may cause Atrial Fibrillation and **stroke**. **Even moderate amounts of alcohol...increase a woman’s risk of breast cancer. Meanwhile, excessive drinking has been linked to cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, esophagus, stomach, colon, liver and rectum and pancreas** as well as risks for pancreatitis and gastritis. Also, drinking low to moderate amounts of alcohol can accelerate brain shrinkage, which is associated with problems in thinking, learning and memory. This effect is especially pronounced in women and teenagers. Lastly, alcohol deters those trying to lose weight. It’s caloric, but it doesn’t fill you up the same way food does, and even stimulates appetite. Use of alcohol has been directly tied to childhood obesity. <http://www.shotpakinc.com/home.html>

Binge drinking increases the risk of thrombosis, high blood pressure, liver disease, and sudden cardiac death. Aug. 28, 2004 issue of New Scientist magazine."

<http://www.jointogether.org/sa/news/summaries/reader/0%2C1854%2C574367%2C00.html>

The risk of sleep-related breathing disorders (SRBD) rises with every drink men consume on an average daily basis.... Peppard, P.E., Austin, D., Brown, R.L. (2007) Association of Alcohol Consumption and Sleep Disordered Breathing In Men And Women. [Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine](#), 3(3): 265-270.

People who consume moderate amounts of alcohol have smaller brains than non-drinkers

<http://www.jointogether.org/sa/news/summaries/reader/0%2C1854%2C568105%2C00.html>

People who drink are more likely to smoke because even small amounts of alcohol enhance the pleasurable effects of nicotine.... February/March 2004 issue of the journal [Nicotine and Tobacco Research](#)

Alcohol Third Leading Cause of Death

According to research published by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, **alcohol was the third leading cause of death in the year 2000**. Alcohol consumption caused 85,000 deaths in the U.S. Researchers reported that that figure was conservative, considering that death among people who had stopped drinking alcohol could have been due to damage or illness from their previous alcohol use. Deaths were caused by:¹

- alcohol-related traffic crashes
- various types of cancers, including esophageal, liver, female breast cancer
- stroke
- hypertensive heart disease
- chronic liver diseases
- cirrhosis

Journal of the American Medical Association, 2001.

Regular Alcohol Drinkers at Risk for Colon Cancer

September 17, 2003

A Japanese study finds that men who consume alcohol regularly are twice as likely to develop colon cancer than non-drinkers.... [Agence France Presse \(AFP\) News](#) , Sept. 13. 2007

Teens and Health Consequences: Obesity and High Blood Pressure by Age 24:

New research finds that people who began binge drinking during their teenage years are more likely to have serious health problems by the age of 24....

The researchers found that individuals who began binge drinking at age 13 and continued throughout their teen years were nearly four times more likely to be overweight or obese and almost 3-1/2 times more likely to have high blood pressure when they were 24 years old than were people who never or rarely drank heavily during adolescence.

[Journal of Studies on Alcohol](#), July 2004.

Individuals with Eating Disorders up to Five Times Likelier to Abuse Alcohol and Illicit Drugs

[U]p to one-half of individuals with eating disorders abuse alcohol or illicit drugs, compared to nine percent of the general population. Conversely, up to 35 percent of alcohol or illicit drug abusers have eating disorders compared to three percent of the general population.

<http://www.casacolumbia.org/absolutenm/templates/PressReleases.aspx?articleid=350&zoneid=46>

Young Drinkers Face Array of Health Problems Later in Life

January 28, 2008

Heart disease, stroke and diabetes are just some of the health problems facing people over age 35 who started drinking heavily during their teens and as young adults.... Researchers said that early, heavy drinkers are more likely to develop "**metabolic syndrome**" -- a cluster of health problems including obesity, high blood pressure, low levels of "good" cholesterol, high blood sugar, and high triglycerides. They drew their conclusions from studying the lifetime drinking

patterns of 2,800 adults ages 35-80.

Early drinkers were defined as those who started drinking early in life and tended to drink heavily in their teens and as young adults. They were more than one-third more likely to develop metabolic syndrome than adults who drank moderately over their lifespan.

[Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism](#), January 2008. Also see [Reuters](#), Jan. 25, 2008.

Adolescent substance abuse disorders are a predictor of young adult mortality: Researchers found that young adult males with substance abuse disorders had a mortality rate far in excess of the norm for their non-addicted contemporaries. For example, 2 percent of the adolescents studied had died by the time the eight-year study period ended, including 23 percent of the African American males in the study.

<http://www.higheredcenter.org/>

University of Missouri-Columbia researcher says moderate alcohol consumption could reduce damage to affected tissue following a heart attack, according to a [news release](#) from the school...BUT.

"Every time you take a drink of alcohol, you're killing brain cells," Korthuis said. "We're trying to identify these chemical reactions so that **we can develop a drug that would start this chain reaction, but not have the side effects of alcohol.** We've also found other natural compounds have similar effects such as capsaicin, a compound in Tabasco sauce that creates that hot sensation." Fall 2004 in the journal

[Microcirculation](#)

Women Who Drink An Average Of 2 Drinks Per Day (3.9% Of Middle-Aged Women) Or More Have An Increased Risk of the Heart Problem, Atrial Fibrillation

- A previous study found a significant trend toward a higher risk for AF with higher levels of alcohol consumption in men.
- In the current study of middle-aged women, only average consumption of at least 2 alcoholic beverages per day was associated with a higher risk for AF vs no alcohol consumption.

- 44.3% of women were nondrinkers. Rates of average consumption of less than 1 drink per day, 1 to 2 drinks per day, and 2 or more drinks per day were 45.4%, 6.4%, and 3.9%, respectively.

Female Heavy Drinkers Have Increased Risk of AF CME/CE

News Author: Lisa Nainggolan
CME Author: Charles Vega, MD, FAAFP

Dec. 3, 2008,

Regular Alcohol Drinkers at Risk for Colon Cancer

September 17, 2003

A Japanese study finds that men who consume alcohol regularly are twice as likely to develop colon cancer than non-drinkers....

In examining the colon-cancer rate among drinkers, non-drinkers, and those trying to abstain from drinking, the researchers found that the cancer rate was twice as high among drinking males as non-drinkers. Furthermore, men trying to give up drinking had the same risk of developing colon cancer as regular drinkers. [Agence France Presse \(AFP\) News](#) , Sept. 13. 2007.

Drinking low to moderate amounts of alcohol can accelerate brain shrinkage.

The more people drank, the smaller the size of their brains, according to a study in the Archives of Neurology. Even people who drank lightly, from one to seven drinks a week, had slightly smaller brains than nondrinkers, the study found. The association was especially pronounced in women. **Low brain volume is associated with problems in thinking, learning and memory.**

<http://members.jointogether.org/ct/57ACHU71rYie/ story>

Variations in Gene DNA Boost Drinkers' Cancer Risk

Variations in the DNA of certain genes can increase the risk of cancer in people who drink alcohol, according to researchers who reviewed studies on alcohol consumption, genetic polymorphisms and cancer.

The review was published in the February issue of the *The Lancet Oncology*.

Previous research has shown a clear link between alcohol consumption and health risk, according to background information in the review. Recent figures show that drinking alcohol was a major contributing factor in the development of almost 400,000 cancers worldwide in 2002. In that same year, 323,900 cancer deaths (3.6 percent of all cancer deaths) were alcohol-related.

The Washington Post, January 30, 2009, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/30/AR2009013001834.html?wprss=rss_health/wires .

Alcohol Responsible for Emergency Room Visits

There were 126,704 emergency department visits by patients aged 20 and younger where alcohol was the only substance involved in the visit, according to a recent study from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration. The full report can be found at

<http://dawninfo.samhsa.gov/pubs/edpubs/default.asp>.

Reduce Crime and Violence - Improve Campus Health & Wellness

- Studies show that alcohol is a factor in 66 percent of student **suicides** and 60 percent of all **sexually-transmitted diseases**, including HIV.
[http://www.jointogether.org/sa/issues/hot_issues/binge/more/College Norms/Graduating Srs](http://www.jointogether.org/sa/issues/hot_issues/binge/more/College%20Norms/Graduating%20Srs).
- One out of four college student **deaths** is related to alcohol use.
[http://www.jointogether.org/sa/issues/hot_issues/binge/more/College Norms/Graduating Srs](http://www.jointogether.org/sa/issues/hot_issues/binge/more/College%20Norms/Graduating%20Srs).
- **Individuals who begin binge drinking at age 13** and continue throughout their teen years are nearly four times more likely to be overweight or obese and almost 3 ½ times more likely to have high blood pressure by the time they are 24 years old than people who never or rarely drink heavily during adolescence.
[Journal of Studies on Alcohol](#), July 2004.
- **Smokers** are 10 times more likely than nonsmokers to suffer from alcohol addiction.
[Nicotine and Tobacco Research](#), February/March 2004
- **The World Health Organization** reports that health threats from legal drugs, alcohol and nicotine, exceeds that of illegal drugs throughout the world. Illegal drugs contributed 0.8 percent to global ill health in 2000, while alcohol accounted for 4.1 percent and cigarettes 4 percent.
MS NBC NEWS - <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4556847/> ; March 18, 2004
- Alcohol and other Drug (AOD) Addiction is a disorder caused by **genetic disposition**, ACTIVATED by the use of alcohol. It is crucial to eradicate the stigma suffered by drug users that can make treatment more difficult, the report said.
MS NBC NEWS - <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4556847/> ; www.reuters.com; March 18,200.
- Researchers have established that **the risk for developing an alcohol use disorder is approximately 50 to 60 percent genetic**.
(<http://www.alcoholcostcalculator.org/kids/teens2.html>; the George Washington University Medical Center) [40% Environmental: Those with the genetics for the disease of alcoholism merely have to drink in order to activate the disease. The only way to avoid addiction is NOT to drink.]
- "[H]eavy drinkers [were] **significantly impaired** on measures of working memory, processing speed, attention, executive function, and balance," the researchers wrote.

[Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research](#), 2004.

Major depressive episodes and AOD Use. Combined data from SAMHSA's 2004 to 2006 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health were used to produce annual averages of the rate of past year major depressive episodes, depression related levels of impairment, average number of days of inability to carry out normal activities due to depression, and history of previous depressive episodes.

Based on SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 8.5% of youth (about 2.1 million youth) had experienced at least one major depressive episode during the past year. Rates of depression varied by gender and age. <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k8/youthDepress/youthDepress.cfm>

Among young adults who had not used *alcohol* previously, 33.7% of those with a major depressive episode started using alcohol compared with 24.8% of the young adults who had not experienced a major depressive episode in the past year.

Among young adults who had not used *any illicit drug* previously, those who experienced a major depressive episode in the past year were twice as likely to have initiated use of an illicit drug than young adults who had not experienced a major depressive episode in the past year (12.0% vs. 5.8%).

About 1.5 million young adults (25.1% of the young adults who had not used alcohol previously) used alcohol for the first time in the past year. <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k7/newUsers/depression.cfm>

Young adults experiencing major depressive episodes within the past year were:

- Approximately 60 percent more likely to have initiated **cigarette use** than those in their age group who had not experienced depression in the past year (12.7 versus 7.8 percent, respectively).
- Approximately 35 percent more likely to have initiated **alcohol use** than those in their age group who had not experienced depression in the past year (33.7 versus 24.8 percent).
- Twice as likely to have initiated use of an **illicit drug** as those in their age group who had not experienced depression in the past year (12.0 versus 5.8 percent).
- Twice as likely to start **abusing pain relief medication** than were their contemporaries who had not experienced recent depression (7.1 versus 2.8 percent).

The full report, including detailed information on demographic groups and types of substance abuse, is available on the Web at <http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k7/newusers/depression.cfm>.

Women who consume two or more alcoholic drinks daily are 57 percent more likely to suffer from coronary *heart disease* than moderate drinkers.... **Women who consumed alcohol two or more times a day had death rates seven times higher** than women who drank one or two drinks a week.

<http://www.jointogether.org/news/research/summaries/2004/female-excessive-drinkers-at.html>

Health Risks of Alcohol Use, Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Immediate Health Risks

Excessive alcohol use has immediate effects that increase the risk of many harmful health conditions. These immediate effects are most often the result of binge drinking and include the following:

- Unintentional injuries, including traffic injuries, falls, drownings, burns and unintentional firearm injuries.⁷
- Violence, including intimate partner violence and child maltreatment. About 35% of victims report that offenders are under the influence of alcohol.⁸ Alcohol use is also associated with 2 out of 3 incidents of intimate partner violence.⁸ Studies have also shown that alcohol is a leading factor in child maltreatment and neglect cases, and is the most frequent substance abused among these

parents.⁹

- Risky sexual behaviors, including unprotected sex, sex with multiple partners, and increased risk of sexual assault. These behaviors can result in unintended pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases.^{10,11}
- Miscarriage and stillbirth among pregnant women, and a combination of physical and mental birth defects among children that last throughout life.^{12,13}
- Alcohol poisoning, a medical emergency that results from high blood alcohol levels that suppress the central nervous system and can cause loss of consciousness, low blood pressure and body temperature, coma, respiratory depression, or death.¹⁴

Long-Term Health Risks

Over time, excessive alcohol use can lead to the development of chronic diseases, neurological impairments and social problems. These include but are not limited to:

- Neurological problems, including dementia, stroke and neuropathy.^{15,16}
- Cardiovascular problems, including myocardial infarction, cardiomyopathy, atrial fibrillation and hypertension.¹⁷
- Psychiatric problems, including depression, anxiety, and suicide.¹⁸
- Social problems, including unemployment, lost productivity, and family problems.^{19,20}
- Cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, colon, and breast.²¹
- In general, the risk of cancer increases with increasing amounts of alcohol.
- Liver diseases, including:
 - Alcoholic hepatitis.
 - Cirrhosis, which is among the 15 leading causes of all deaths in the United States.²²
 - Among persons with Hepatitis C virus, worsening of liver function and interference with medications used to treat this condition.²³
- Other gastrointestinal problems, including pancreatitis and gastritis.^{24,25}

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http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/quickstats/general_info.htm

New research shows that women who take hormones and drink alcohol double their risk of developing breast cancer, the Associated Press reported Nov. 19. Nov. 19, 2002 issue of the [Annals of Internal Medicine](#)

Alcohol Poses More Health Risks for Women

9/17/2003

The research found that women are more likely to develop alcohol-related liver diseases in less time and after drinking less than men. In addition, women are more apt to develop alcoholic hepatitis and to die from cirrhosis of the liver.

The study further showed that women are more likely to suffer **alcohol-induced brain damage**.

The study's findings are published in the September 2003 issue of the [Mayo Clinic's Women's HealthSource](#).

Women Suffer Worse Hangovers than Men

9/17/2003

For the study, researchers polled 1,230 college students who consumed alcohol. They were asked to identify symptoms they experienced after drinking, such as headaches, vomiting, feeling weak, and inability to concentrate.

The study is published in the Sept. 15 issue of the journal *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*.

Female Excessive Drinkers at Risk for Heart Disease

1/29/2004

Women who consume two or more alcoholic drinks daily are 57 percent more likely to suffer from coronary heart disease than moderate drinkers, the [Scotsman](#) reported Jan. 27

Avoid Alcohol to Prevent Holiday Heart Attacks

December 18, 2007

Alcohol, rich food, and increased levels of stress and excitement are a recipe for a potentially fatal holiday heart attack, according to researchers who studied spikes in coronary death rates around Christmas and New Year's. [Los Angeles Times: http://www.latimes.com/features/health/la-hexmascardio17dec17,1,1920376.story?amp;cset=true&ctrack=1&cset=true](http://www.latimes.com/features/health/la-hexmascardio17dec17,1,1920376.story?amp;cset=true&ctrack=1&cset=true)

Stats Offer Snapshot of Americans' Health

from [WebMD](#) — a health information Web site for patients

- Percentage of adults who got at least 30 minutes of **light exercise** 5 days a week in 2008: 31%
- In 1998: 29.8%
- **Percentage of adults who smoked in 2008: 20.8%**
- **In 1997: 24.7%**
- **Percentage of adults who had 5 or more drinks in one day at least once in 2008: 20.8%**

- **In 1997: 21.4%**
- Percentage of adults who **ever got an HIV test** as of 2008: 38.3%
- As of 1998: 30.2%
- Percentage of adults 65-74 who **needed help with personal care** in 2008: 3.4%
- Age 75-84: 7.3%
- Age 85+: 17.6%
- Percentage of adults who recently experienced **serious psychological distress** in 2008: 3%
- In 1997: 3.3%
- Percentage of adults diagnosed with **diabetes** in 2008: 8%
- In 1997: 5.1%

Centers for Disease Control: "Selected Estimates Based on Data from the January-June 2008 National Health Interview Survey," Dec. 17, 2008. U.S. Census Bureau, *The 2009 Statistical Abstract*, Dec. 17, 2008. <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/585557?src=mp&spon=21&uac=98100FT>