

Q. Is drinking a little alcohol healthy?

A. Most people agree that drinking too much alcohol, even once in a while, is harmful.

After all, alcohol abuse is a frequent factor in traffic accidents, deaths, work-related injuries and a long list of social problems.

But if you're not a heavy drinker, a little alcohol is OK, right?

Before you pop open another beer or open a bottle of wine, consider this:

Some research suggests red wine may help prevent heart disease. But the evidence is pretty weak, according to Harvard research.¹

It's possible that a plant-based diet, physical activity, and strong social ties have a greater impact on heart health and long life than red wine.

Alcohol: Here's what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends:²

- **Men:** No more than two drinks per day
- **Women:** No more than one drink per day. Zero if pregnant.
- **And if you don't drink,** don't start for any reason.

Light drinking or sans alcohol? Before you pour another drink, here's a few things to consider:



Light drinking & cancer risk

An Italian study looked at data for 92,000 light drinkers. Researchers found that even moderate alcohol use greatly increased the risk for:³

- **Breast cancer:** 5,000 deaths each year
- **Throat cancers:** 29,000 deaths each year

The problem with 'just a sip'

In Finland, researchers found that when bacteria in your mouth mixes with alcohol, it creates a compound called **acetaldehyde**.⁴ It's a known cancer-causing agent.

- **It only takes 5 seconds** for acetaldehyde to form after taking a sip of alcohol. You can spit out your drink. But you're still exposed to the compound for at least 10 minutes.

Alcohol and longevity

A University of Cambridge study looked at alcohol use and early death for about 600,000 people.⁵

- Researchers found that drinking shortens life span and raises the risk for heart failure and stroke.
- And that's not heavy drinking. The results were for drinking just a little more than recommended limits.

ASK THE *Wellness* DOCTOR

So how much alcohol is OK to drink?

None. That's probably a hard answer to swallow for a lot of people.

About 70 percent of all adults report drinking alcohol in the past year, and 55 percent drank in the past month.⁶

But if you want to live longer and be healthier, you may want to rethink drinking alcohol.

How about an iced-tea or glass of water? Here's to good health... Cheers.

References

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