

# Boozing can age you right down to your cells

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(HealthDay)—The more you booze it up, the more your cells age, increasing your risk for age-related health problems like heart disease, diabetes, cancer and dementia, a new study suggests.

Researchers studied 134 alcoholics between the ages of 41 and 85 and a control group of people in the same age group who weren't alcoholics.

DNA samples revealed that the alcoholics had shortened telomeres.

"Telomeres, the protein caps on the ends of [human chromosomes](#), are markers of aging and overall health," said study leader Dr. Naruhisa Yamaki, a clinical fellow at the Kobe University Graduate School of Medicine in Japan.

Every time a cell replicates, a tiny bit of telomere is lost, so they get shorter with age. As time passes, that leaves chromosomes less protected so cells may be unable to function properly. But some people have [shorter telomeres](#) for reasons other than aging.

"Our study showed that alcoholic patients have a shortened [telomere length](#), which means that heavy drinking causes biological aging at a cellular level," Yamaki said.

He added that it's important for people to understand that heavy drinking causes telomere shortening, because "awareness of this fact provides important information necessary for people to live healthier."

Yamaki presented the study Sunday at a Research Society on Alcoholism meeting in Denver. Research presented at medical meetings is typically considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [alcohol and public health](#).

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