

How much alcohol is really OK?

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(HealthDay)—All the good news/bad news studies about alcohol can leave you confused. But research suggests that you still need to keep moderation in mind when you raise a glass.

You may have heard reports about [red wine](#) in particular, and the suggestion that it can boost health, especially heart health, because of its antioxidant resveratrol. According to a round-up of studies published in *Consumer Reports*, moderate amounts of red wine may confer some benefits, but any pluses rapidly change to risks for [heavy drinkers](#).

A research review about overall alcohol consumption, published in 2016 in the journal *Circulation*, confirmed that the picture is rather complex—there can be some immediate health threats from drinking any type of alcohol, even in moderate amounts.

There's little doubt that alcohol's risks increase with quantity. The World Health Organization warns that alcohol is a factor in more than 200 types of medical conditions. And about 25 percent of deaths in people aged 20 to 39 are linked to alcohol.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer calls alcohol a carcinogen, associating it with cancers of the head and neck, esophagus, liver and breast. The more you drink and the more regularly you drink over time, the higher your risk of developing an alcohol-associated cancer. In the United States, alcohol use accounts for about 3.5 percent of all cancer deaths every year, researchers estimate.

Experts say that if you're not a drinker, there aren't any health-related reasons for you to start. If you do drink, it's best to stay within the guidelines for [moderate drinking](#), though there's no 100 percent safe level.

For women, moderate means one drink a day; for men, two drinks. One drink is equal to 5 ounces of wine or a 12-ounce beer or one shot (1.5 ounce) of an 80-proof liquor.

More information: The American Heart Association has more on the

Circulation report about the [risks and benefits](#) of alcohol.

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