

the RED CUP Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

Q How is drinking in moderation sometimes good for your health?

A. It can sound like a mixed message: alcohol may have some health benefits but it may also increase your risk of health problems. So which is it? When it comes to alcohol, the health benefits only come with moderate drinking (for men, that's up to two drinks per day, and for women, it's one per day).

Although some studies suggest that red wine offers additional health-protective effects due to its high antioxidant content, beer and hard alcohol seem to provide the same health benefits. Let's take a closer look at the connection between alcohol and health. First, **strong medical evidence exists for the link between moderate drinking and a reduced risk of heart disease, according to the New England Journal of Medicine.** Here's what we know:

- Moderate drinking can diminish the risk of developing heart disease or dying of a heart attack. Why? Researchers think that blockages are reduced in the arteries to the heart and brain. Evidence shows that heart disease risk can be substantially higher among people who drink to excess, even occasionally.
- Studies suggest that those who drink moderately cut their risk of developing gallstones by about 50%.
- There are indications that moderation may reduce the risk for type 2 diabetes; however, consuming large quantities of alcohol actually increases the risk for this condition.
- A French study found that people who drank daily in moderation were less likely to develop dementia than nondrinkers.
- Moderate drinkers have a 70% reduced risk for ischemic strokes. However, heavy drinking increases the risk of ischemic stroke.

These beneficial effects actually go away and become risk factors if people drink too much. Keep in mind that these effects will vary by a person's health history, age, gender, and family history. It's all about moderation.



wildfact

UA students drink an average of one night a week.

(2010 Health & Wellness Survey, n=2,931)



Got a question about alcohol?

Email it to redcup@email.arizona.edu



www.health.arizona.edu

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