

Alcohol and Health: What is the Doctor's advice?



The Internet is full of mixed messages about alcohol. On the one hand, moderate amounts have been linked to health benefits. On the other, it is addictive and highly toxic, especially when you drink too much. The truth is that the health effects of alcohol vary between individuals and depend on the amount and type of alcohol consumed. This article discusses how alcohol affects your health.



Alcohol & Liver

Alcohol is metabolized by the liver, and frequent intake can lead to increased fat inside liver cells. Alcohol abuse can lead to cirrhosis, a very serious condition.

Alcohol & Heart

Moderate alcohol consumption may raise "good" HDL cholesterol, decrease blood pressure & cut the risk of diabetes. While moderate alcohol consumption may reduce your risk of heart disease, heavy drinking may increase it.

Alcohol & Brain

While alcohol intoxication is only temporary, chronic alcohol abuse can impair brain function permanently. Many people facing anxiety & depression drink intentionally to reduce stress and improve mood. While drinking may provide a few hours of

relief, it will worsen your overall mental health. People may start abusing alcohol due to depression or become depressed by abusing alcohol.

Alcohol & Cancer

Drinking alcohol may increase your risk of certain cancers, especially mouth and throat cancer. This is irrespective of the amount of alcohol consumed.

Alcohol & Pregnancy

Alcohol abuse is one of the world's most common causes of birth defects. The fetus is particularly vulnerable early in pregnancy. Pregnant ladies should not consume alcohol. Period.

Alcohol & Dependence

Alcohol consumption can lead to alcohol dependence, or alcoholism, in predisposed individuals. Chronic alcohol abuse can wreak havoc on your body and brain, increasing your risk of many diseases.

Alcohol & Obesity

Alcohol is the second most calorie-rich nutrient after fat — packing about 7 calories per gram. Heavy drinking and beer are linked to increased weight gain, while moderate drinking and wine are linked to reduced weight gain or even weight loss.



Which type of alcohol is better?

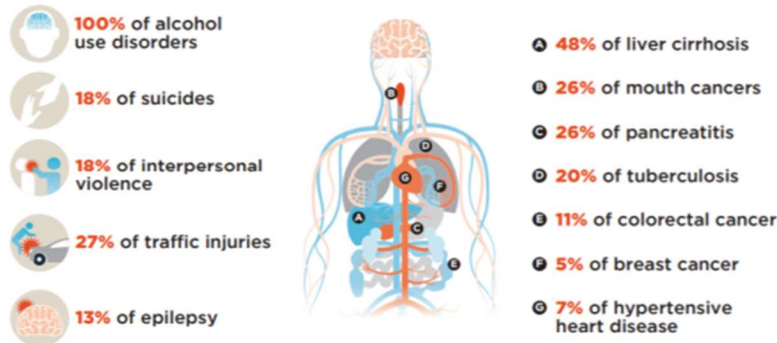
Red wine may be one of the healthiest alcoholic beverages, probably due to its high concentration of antioxidants.

Alcohol and health

3 million deaths
6 deaths every minute
from harmful use of alcohol
every year

women 1/4
men 3/4

Harmful use of alcohol causes



The Bottom Line

- At the end of the day, the effects of alcohol range from a mild positive impact on your wellbeing to a health catastrophe.
- It is believed that drinking small amounts — especially of red wine, is linked to various health benefits (due to presence of an anti-oxidant called resveratrol).
- On the other hand, alcohol abuse and alcohol addiction are linked to severe negative effects on both physical and mental health, as discussed earlier.

How much Alcohol is “safe” for drinking?

- As per WHO “No level of alcohol consumption is safe for our health” Alcohol is a toxic, psychoactive, and dependence-producing substance and has been classified as a Group 1 carcinogen by them.
- However, if you still wish to drink then remember that for women, a safe limit of alcohol is generally considered to be no more than one drink per day, while for men, it's no more than two drinks per day.

The Verdict

- If you don't drink, no need to start for “healthy” reasons.
- If you do like to drink, stick to the rule of “safe limit.”. It is also better to avoid drinking every day to avoid ending up with alcohol addiction.
- If you have any medical condition (like Cirrhosis, Fatty Liver, Cancer, Heart disease, High cholesterol, Hypertension, Diabetes or Neuropathy) avoid drinking Alcohol even in small amounts.

Dr Vinay Verma, M.D. (Medicine)
Cardiac Care Clinic, Panchkula