

Cheers To Good Health:

*Who Knew That Brew
May Be Good for You?*



*Information on
Moderate Beer Consumption and Your Health
from the National Beer Wholesalers Association*

Researchers are catching on to what has been legend for centuries: drinking beer may actually be good for you.

Ancient civilizations drank beer to help everything from fever to skin conditions to mood disorders. Now, some researchers report that moderate beer consumption may help reduce risks of serious illnesses like heart disease, stroke and diabetes. And beer just may have unique health contributions beyond what other alcohol beverages offer. The key message is moderation, as well as a balanced lifestyle, for those adults who choose to enjoy beer.

Beer: The Heart of the Issue

Over 100 studies suggest that moderate alcohol consumption may lower rates of heart disease. Consuming alcohol in moderation (defined by the U.S. government as no more than two drinks per day for men, or one drink per day for women) may lower coronary heart disease risk for some people by 30 to 60 percent – even those at high risk because of diabetes, hypertension or a previous heart attack. ^(1,2)

This has been found to be especially true for men over 45 and women over 55. Researchers aren't exactly sure why alcohol protects the heart, but suggest as a main reason its ability to raise the HDL, or "good" cholesterol.

To lower heart attack risks, which drink is best? Many studies observe



benefits from all types of alcohol and don't specify the type analyzed – beer, wine or liquor. But some research shows that beer may have unique heart-healthy attributes. One study of over 300 heart disease patients found that while all alcohol types may lower the risk of heart disease, those who consumed mainly or exclusively beer had the strongest connection. ⁽³⁾ Other studies show that beer's antioxidant, vitamin B6 and folate content may also play a role in addition to ethanol. ⁽⁴⁾



Beer: Connection to Healthier Bones

Beer contains silicon, an element that aids in bone formation and is found in very high fiber grains, like cereals and the hops used to ferment beer. Researchers in London found that eating foods containing silicon improved bone density in the hips of men and premenopausal women. ⁽⁵⁾

The same researchers later measured the silicon content of 76 different beers, along with blood and urine levels of silicon in healthy volunteers after consuming beer. They found that regardless of type, beer significantly increased blood silicon levels; therefore, beer may be a significant contributor of silicon in the diet. ⁽⁶⁾

Beer: The Emerging Antioxidant/Cancer Connection



Hops and malt used to make beer are rich sources of disease-fighting antioxidants. According to research, antioxidants can prevent cell damage that may lead to cancer and heart disease.

Beer also contains polyphenols, the same antioxidants found in wine, fruits, vegetables and green and black tea. Per serving, beer contains the same

amount of polyphenols as red wine. ⁽⁷⁾ And the darker the brew the better – ales and lagers generally contain more antioxidants than light and nonalcoholic beers.

One particular polyphenol, xanthohumol, is found only in hops and is believed to be a more potent antioxidant than vitamin E. ⁽⁸⁾ This exciting science is still developing, but according to this research, it may be that polyphenols found in hops can slow the growth of cancer cells in test tubes and enhance cancer-fighting enzymes.

Beer: What About the Waistline?

The “beer belly” is a misconception: European studies comparing the body mass index (a measure of healthy weight) and waist-hip

measurements of beer drinkers to nondrinkers debunk this stereotype. ⁽⁹⁾

Beer's effect on weight has been in the news following the popularity of "low carb" diets that may blacklist beer. Low-carb advocates say that maltose from barley malt, present in the initial stages of the brewing process, is a carbohydrate, which is often limited on low-carb diet plans. However, during fermentation, the yeast consumes maltose, turning it into alcohol and carbonation. So the end product, beer, contains little or no maltose.

Low-carb advocates also claim that beer has a high glycemic index (GI), a rating used to measure how fast and far blood sugars rise after eating certain foods. But there is no scientific consensus on the GI of beer because it is impossible to measure without consuming 50 grams of carbohydrates worth of beer over a short period of time – that's four to ten 12 ounce beers over roughly 15 minutes! This is clearly not recommended, nor is it typical of the average beer drinker.

The bottom line? Beer calories don't migrate to one's middle any more than excess calories from any other food or beverage. The average 150 calories from a regular beer, or 95 to 100 calories from a light beer, can easily fit into a calorie-controlled meal. In fact, compared to some cocktails, beer can be a much lower calorie choice. And keep in mind what beer doesn't contain: fat, cholesterol, caffeine and nitrate. Beer is also low in sodium and sugar and contains more protein and B vitamins than wine. ⁽¹⁰⁾



How Alcohol Beverages Add Up

Beverage (serving size)	Calories	Carbs (grams)	Fat
Beer			
Beer, light (12 oz)	95-100	4.6	0
Beer, regular (12 oz)	150	13	0
Wine			
White wine (5 oz)	120	1.4	0
Red wine (5 oz)	127	3	0
Wine cooler (12 oz)	180	21	0
Sweet dessert wine (6 oz)	283	24	0
Mixed Drinks			
Whiskey Sour (5 oz)	183	8	0
Gin or Vodka Tonic (8 oz)	200	16	0
Screwdriver (8 oz)	230	19	0
Rum & Coke (8 oz)	240	22	0
Vodka & Cranberry (8 oz)	250	26	0
Cosmopolitan (8 oz)	250	17.6	0
Martini (8 oz)	267	0	0
Manhattan (5 oz)	288	4.4	0
Long Island Ice Tea (5 oz)	327	18	0
White Russian (5 oz)	386	25	6
Daiquiri (7 oz)	393	14	0
Black Russian (5 oz)	407	27	0
Piña Colada * (7 oz)	408	62	0
Margarita * (7 oz)	473	30	0

*Frozen or on the rocks

All nutrients are approximate as serving sizes, brands and mixers vary. All mixed drinks mixed with 80-proof liquor. Source: USDA Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 16 and Nutritionist V Software, First Data Bank Inc.



Beer: The Message of Moderation

The USDA Dietary Guidelines acknowledge that moderate alcohol consumption may be part of a healthy diet, but caution against excessive consumption of alcohol. Some drinkers may risk alcohol addiction or increased health risks, so individual and family circumstances should be considered in deciding whether or not to consume alcohol.

It is interesting to note that according to researchers, the risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease may be higher in alcohol abstainers, decline with moderate consumption, but begin to rise significantly when intake exceeds moderation. Alcohol consumption beyond moderate levels can raise the risk of cardiovascular disease and a number of kinds of cancer.

As with all foods and beverages, portion control and moderation is the key. And of course moderate alcohol consumption is no substitute for exercise and a heart healthy diet high in fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and low in unhealthy saturated fats.

AIM-Alcohol in Moderation has reviewed the information in this booklet and its Social, Scientific and Medical Council supports educational messages that emphasize moderation as part of a well balanced lifestyle for healthy adults who chose to drink. For more information on sensible drinking and health, please visit www.drinkingandyou.com.

Sources

1. Reviews in Cardiovascular Medicine. 2002, 3(1): 7-13.
2. Postgrad Med J. 2001 Dec; 77: 747-752.
3. Epidemiology. 2001 Jul; 12(4): 380-2.
4. Eur J Clin Nutr. 2001 Jul; 55(7): 605-9.
5. J Bone Miner Res. 2004 Feb; 19(2): 297-307.
6. British J Nutr. 2004; 91: 403-409.
7. Am Cancer Society. Thun MJ. Beer May Reduce the Risk of Death Due to Cancer. Presented at the 1998 Society of Toxicology Annual Meeting.
8. J Agric Food Chem. 2002 Sep; 48(9): 3876-84.
9. Eur J Clin Nutr. 2003 Oct; 57(10): 1250-3.
10. Am J Med Sci. 2000 Nov; 320(5): 320-6.

For further information: USDA Dietary Guidelines
www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines.

The National Beer Wholesalers Association is committed to disseminating useful and truthful information about beer consumption. This information is not intended for and should not be used as a marketing or advertising tool. Science regarding the health effects of beer continues to develop, and the health consequences of consumption may vary from person to person. Adults of legal drinking age should consult their family physicians about the health effects of responsible alcohol consumption. And if you choose to drink, please do so responsibly.



National Beer Wholesalers Association

1101 King Street, Suite 600
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2944
703-683-4300 • FAX: 703-683-8965
Toll Free: 800-300-6417
www.nbwa.org