

May: Alcohol



More and more studies are showing that moderate alcohol intake may be associated with certain health benefits. On the contrary, excessive alcohol consumption is linked with a number of serious health and social problems. An individual should consider personal and family health history as well as the risks and benefits involved before using alcohol. It is important to know the difference between moderate and excessive drinking and the potential outcomes of each.

A standard alcoholic drink is equal to:

- 12 fluid ounces of beer
- 5 fluid ounces of wine
- 1.5 fluid ounces of liquor

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines moderate drinking as:

- Men: No more than two standard alcoholic drinks/day
- Women: No more than one standard alcoholic drink/day
- Adult (Men and Women) over 65: No more than one standard alcoholic drink/day

The USDA defines heavy alcohol consumption as:

- Men: 15 or more standard alcoholic drinks/week or 5 or more alcoholic drinks on any given occasion.
- Women: 8 or more standard alcoholic drinks/week or 4 or more alcoholic drinks on any given occasion.
- Adults (Men and Women) over 65: 8 or more standard alcoholic drinks/week or 4 or more alcoholic drinks on any given occasion.

For most people moderate drinking is safe. Studies have consistently found that moderate alcohol consumption is associated with significant reductions in the risk of coronary heart disease and ischemic stroke. Although there is limited evidence, studies are starting to show that moderate drinking may also be linked with these potential health benefits:

- Reduced risk of type 2 diabetes
- Reduced risk of dementia
- Reduced risk of gallstones

Along with the positive health benefits, there are also some negative impacts that can occur in health that are linked with moderate alcohol consumption:

- Increased risk of breast cancer
- Alcohol-related birth defects
- Progression to heavy alcohol consumption in some people
- Weight Gain: Remember that alcohol has calories! If weight is gained the potential benefits that may be received from moderate alcohol consumption will be cancelled out.

While moderate drinking holds both positive and negative impacts on health, heavy alcohol consumption only has negative impacts on health. Excessive drinking is associated with increased risk of:

- Hypertension
- Hemorrhagic Stroke
- Heart Rhythm Disturbances
- Dementia
- Damage to internal organs including heart, liver and pancreas.
- Accidents, Injury and Violence

It is also important to keep in mind that some people should not drink at all, including alcoholics, children, pregnant women, people on certain medicines and people with some medical conditions. If you have questions about whether it is safe for you to drink, speak with your healthcare provider.

Small changes may be all that is necessary to cut down consumption and reduce the risks of having alcohol-related problems. Consider some of the strategies below. A single approach won't work for everyone, give each strategy a fair trial. If progress hasn't been made after 2 to 3 months, consider quitting drinking altogether, seeking professional help, or both.

- Keep Track: Making notes of each drink before you drink it may help you slow down when needed.
- Measure: Know the standard drink size so drinks can be counted accurately.
- Pace and Space: When drinking pace and sip slowly. Have no more than one standard drink per hour. Include "drink spacers" making every other drink a non-alcoholic one such as water.
- Include food: Eating food before drinking will allow the body to absorb the alcohol slowly.
- Find Alternatives: Fill free time with healthy activities, healthy relationships and hobbies.
- Avoid "Triggers:" Avoid people, places and activities that may trigger the urge to drink.

Here are some local agencies that help with alcohol and substance abuse:

Center for Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Services (CADAS)
One Elizabeth Place

Southeast, 3rd Floor
Dayton, OH 45417
Phone: 937-461-5223

Samaritan Behavioral Health
601 S. Edwin C. Moses Blvd.
Elizabeth Place, 4th Floor
Dayton, OH 45417
Phone: 937-734-8333

