

Alcohol does have health benefits.

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Latest study claims in an article published in Australia, coming from CNN- headlines, “No safe level” for alcohol consumption. On the same breath it says, ‘if continued with increased consumption of alcohol is associated with poorer brain health’.



Does this imply that the headlines discourage people from drinking alcohol, or that the normal safe limit cannot be assessed in general, and is something tailor-made for each one?

South Africa’s president has re-imposed a ban on alcohol sales and ordered the closure of all bars as part of new restrictions to battle a resurgence of coronavirus.

There was an immediate public health benefit that had nothing to do with COVID-19.

On the contrary, Prime Minister in Australia announced restriction to close-down Pubs, clubs, gyms cinemas and places of worship during the height of the endemic when total lockdown was enforced, till the spread of the virus was curtailed.

What is the connection between coronavirus and consumption of alcoholic beverage?

Does a drink at the end of the day more vulnerable to COVID-19? No- papers up to now have been published on this issue.

One paper says that alcohol use, especially heavy use, weakens the immune system and thus reduces the ability to cope with infectious diseases.

That is common knowledge, that heavy drinking causes many problems, but most people with any intelligence would have a drink or two in the evenings, to unwind and relax at the end of the day.

Are the immune systems weakened among people who indulge in a drink or two, every day? No studies have shown that having a drink daily have a negative effect on health.

What is proved so far to strengthen your immune system includes: avoid smoking, eat a diet high in fruits and veggies, exercise regularly, maintain a healthy weight, get adequate sleep, and when it comes to drinking alcoholic beverages, what is acceptable is, **‘if you drink alcohol, drink only in moderation’**.

It is possible that alcohol may compromise the body’s immune system and increase the risk of adverse health outcomes. So, it is presumed that people should minimise their alcohol consumption at times of epidemics, and particularly during COVID-19 pandemic.

It is true that alcohol may not protect against COVID-19, and people should not drink with the assumption that any virus in the body will be attenuated by a drink or two.

It is visible that drinking alcohol minimally, more than bringing harm to your body, brings in a greater risk of injury and violence, including intimate partner violence, and excessive consumption will cause alcoholic poisoning.

Having a drink in the evening at home with the family, after a hard day’s work, will relax your nerves and relate to your loved ones at home much more cordially than not. A glass of red or white wine with your dinner with the family is a most pleasant anticipation,

Alcohol poses health risks if you drink spirits with high concentrations of ethyl alcohol or ethanol, especially when mixed with methanol.

The combination is called ‘denatured alcohol’.

It is said in one paper that even in small quantities, alcohol is known to cause certain types of cancers. Breast cancer among women is a notable example given. Other examples are cancers of the mouth, throat, voice box and oesophagus.

What we know from what we see is that alcohol may increase the risk of these cancers but is alcohol the cause of the cancers?

The incidence of these cancers should be much more in relation to women who drink socially worldwide.

In breast cancer, it is found that alcohol can increase levels of estrogen and other hormones associated with hormone receptor-positive breast cancer.

One paper published in Sri Lanka by a team of researchers: *Ashan Fernando, Umesh Jayarajah, Saumyakala Prabashani, Eshani A. Fernando & Sanjeewa A. Seneviratne*.

Their findings are as follows: A gradual decline in the incidence of breast cancer is documented in developed countries especially over last two decades, while in developing countries the incidence continues to rise. We conducted this study to examine trends in incidence of breast cancer in a developing country, Sri Lanka. Asian women do not drink alcohol, but the incidence of breast cancer is on the increase.

Alcohol is not a bad drink at social levels. When friends meet a drink or two of any alcoholic beverages will make the meeting relaxed and joyful.

At wedding and other functions, it is a noticeable fact that after drinks are served, the guests are more relaxed, and the voices get louder, and the function becomes activated.

It is also true that 3 million deaths a year worldwide are caused or affected with consumption of alcohol. These numbers are from countries where the highest prevalence of drinker's form part of the population, but unheard in countries where the alcohol drinking is only a social event. People in the European Region includes this segment.

In an observational study, which has not been peer-reviewed, researchers from the University of Oxford found that self-reported alcohol intake of some 25,000 people in the UK and found that on brain scans that the brain's grey matter has been affected. The more people drank, the less the volume of their grey matter was detected on scan studies.

Whatever findings from the researchers, the consumption of alcohol has not lessened in the world, lifestyles of people meeting socially, in homes, clubs, function centres and drinking habits have not changed. More and more younger people have started drinking and socialising to a greater extent than when parents restricted their teenagers going out till late nights in those bygone days. Drinking alcohol is a priority comforting drinks in all these situations, but surprisingly life span has extended, and people are more health conscious though indulging in alcoholic spirits.

Alcohol must be doing some good for these healthy people.

It is known that drinking alcohol moderately has its benefits without over-indulging. Moderate drinking is defined as two drinks daily for a man and one drink for a woman. Quantity-wise one drink is equivalent to one bottle of beer, one glass of wine or a small shot of spirits. Spirits like Scotch whiskey you request for a shot/35ml. It has 78 calories: has no proteins, carbs, fat, fibre, and alcohol content is 11.1. A 100g of Scotch has 222 calories and 31.7 alcohols.

Alcohol in low doses dilates arteries and lowers blood pressure. Alcohol is a blood thinner and reduces blood's tendency to clot. These two factors alone reduce the chances of heart disease and angina.

Alcohol also increases the good cholesterol (HDL) in your blood, and red wines do lower LDL cholesterol.

Alcohol can reduce the incidence of stroke for the same reason. Thinning of the blood reduces the risks of the ischemic type of stroke. In older people bleeding from a ruptured brain vessel causes a stroke. In such events, alcohol will worsen in case of a stroke.

Antioxidants and high resveratrol content and pro-angiogenic and anti-inflammatory properties in red wine seem to have cardiovascular benefits.

Talking about beer it is packed with B vitamins, riboflavin (B2) and thiamine. It also has high levels of magnesium and calcium in 2015, the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry reported that a compound found in beer called xanthohumol could protect brain cells from damaging, thus slowing down the progression of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease

When you cannot sleep on occasions due to stress and mental worries an alcoholic drink will relax you and make you sleep. Alcohol is contraindicated for chronic insomnia. Sleep after consuming an alcoholic drink is short-lived and when you wake up may find it difficult to continue the sleep till morning.

A glass of red wine could help you with your weight loss efforts. This is a true observation when you know those friends who indulge in wine drinking daily, the reason being that red wine has a chemical called *ellagic acid*. This chemical seems to slow down the growth of fat cells and stops new ones from being created.

People who drink wines regularly do not get colds often. This is because the antioxidants in red wine can help you reduce your risk of a cold.

A recent study and even Copenhagen trials on 13,000 people have proved that people who drink alcohol regularly may live longer than those who are tee-total. Abstaining from drinking alcohol completely have a high mortality rate than others while moderate drinkers, who consume one to two drinks per day, have the lowest mortality.

Conclusions: A glass of red wine daily wins, but if you want to keep your brain cells healthy a beer daily visiting the local pub and socializing with mates' benefits.

Who did say: "I feel sorry for people who don't drink"? Another said, "When I read about the evils of drinking, I gave up reading."

The saying goes, "Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy". Scott Fitzgerald, in the novel, 'The Great Gatsby' said, first you take a drink, then the drink takes a drink, then the drink takes you.

Hope you like this article.

Comments are most welcome.