

Alcohol is associated with risk of perennial allergic rhinitis

July 29 2008

There is a link between alcohol consumption and increased risk of perennial allergic rhinitis, according to a recent Danish study of 5,870 young adult women. The study, published in the July issue of *Clinical and Experimental Allergy*, found that the risk increased 3% for every additional alcoholic drink per week. In contrast, the authors did not observe any increase in risk of seasonal allergic rhinitis according to alcohol intake.

Allergic rhinitis (AR) is an upper respiratory disorder affecting between 10% and 40% of the population worldwide, and over the last decades, the prevalence of AR has increased in westernised countries. Alcohol consumption is part of the western lifestyle and it has been proposed that alcohol consumption may be one of the factors contributing to the rise in AR, especially because alcohol is a well-known trigger of hypersensitivity reactions and there is evidence that it influences the immune system.

The 5,870 women studied were aged 20-29 years and free of seasonal and perennial allergic rhinitis at the start of the study. They were asked about different lifestyle habits including their general alcohol intake, measured in drinks per week (i.e. glasses of wine, bottles of beer). After a time period of seven to nine years, the women were contacted again and 831 women had developed seasonal AR and 523 had women developed perennial AR, 14% and 9% respectively.

The authors observed a general tendency that the more alcohol the

women reported they drank, the higher their risk of developing perennial allergic rhinitis. For instance, women who reported drinking more than 14 drinks a week were 78% more likely to develop perennial allergic rhinitis than women who had reported drinking less than one drink a week.

"Our study was carried out on female participants only, and it should be recognised that there is evidence to suggest that women may be more susceptible to some of the genetically harmful effects of alcohol than men, perhaps due to differences in fat to water ratio or liver mass to body weight ratio," said lead author Dr. Janne Tolstrup, National Institute of Public Health, Denmark. "Because of this it would be interesting to examine gender differences in the possible effects of alcohol on the development of rhinitis."

"Another interesting finding of this study was that smokers were found to have a decreased risk of seasonal AR, with no change to the risk of perennial AR," said Tolstrup. "We also found that if one or both parents had asthma, the participant was more likely to have perennial AR and this was exacerbated in women who drank over 14 drinks a week."

Source: Wiley

Citation: Alcohol is associated with risk of perennial allergic rhinitis (2008, July 29) retrieved 27 April 2024 from

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