

Alcohol in moderation is good for sick hearts too

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It was still an open question in medicine. Whereas scientific research has shown beneficial effects of moderate alcohol consumption in healthy people, it was not clear whether this could be valid also for patients who already had heart attack, stroke or another ischemic vascular event. A positive answer comes now from a study performed by the Research Laboratories at the Catholic University of Campobasso, Italy: moderate consumption, defined as one or two glasses of wine a day or the equivalent amounts of beer or other alcoholic beverages, significantly reduces the risk of death from any cause in those who already suffered from ischemic vascular disease.

The research, published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* (JACC), was performed using the statistic procedure of meta-analysis which allows to combine different studies conducted worldwide to achieve more precise results. Researchers analyzed the most important scientific studies performed during the last years. Eight in total in four Countries: United States, Sweden, Japan and Great Britain. Each study took into account patients already affected by an ischemic vascular event. During the years following the disease onset, patients were followed by researchers to know which were the lifestyle habits, including [alcohol consumption](#), able to avoid a new clinical event. The meta-analysis allowed to pool all those studies for a total of 16,351 people examined.

"We observed - says Simona Costanzo, epidemiologist and first author of the study - that regular and moderate consumption has beneficial

effects even for people already affected by [heart attack](#), or stroke. Not only they are less likely to be affected by similar diseases again, but all-cause mortality too resulted to be lower than in those who did not consume any alcoholic beverage".

The effect is very similar to that observed in healthy people. "Risk reduction - Costanzo argues - is about 20%. This means that one event out of five can be spared. It is a huge advantage, comparable to the one already recorded for healthy individuals".

"Studied by our research group for a long time - says Augusto Di Castelnuovo, Head of the Statistic Unit at the Research Laboratories of the Catholic University in Campobasso and co-author of the study - the beneficial effects of [moderate alcohol consumption](#) in healthy people are well established. Now we have reason to believe that [alcoholic beverages](#) work by the same protective mechanisms also for people already affected by ischemic [vascular diseases](#)".

But, as all researches state, the key word is moderation. "When we talk about moderate alcohol consumption, we mean something quite far from what we use to see in TV fictions - says Licia Iacoviello, Head of the Laboratory of Environmental and Genetic Epidemiology and responsible of the Moli-sani Project - We refer to moderation as drinking regularly, at low doses, within a healthy lifestyle, such as the Mediterranean diet. A glass of wine or beer during meals has always been an integral part of the Mediterranean way of eating. Our research highlights another crucial issue: drinking has not only to be moderate, but also regular. A moderate consumption spread along the week is positive. The same amount of weekly alcohol, concentrated in a couple of days is definitely harmful".

"Despite these new positive results- argues Giovanni de Gaetano, Director of the Research Laboratories - we do believe that teetotallers, either healthy or ill, should not start drinking with the aim to earn more

health. Our study, as those conducted by our group in the past, is not a kind of invitation to start drinking, but the recognition of a particular lifestyle. This time we need to be cautious since we deal with sick people. We recommend to them to discuss with their own doctor the best choice in terms of alcoholic beverage consumption".

Provided by Catholic University - Campobasso

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