

Alcohol damages much more than the liver

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Alcohol does much more harm to the body than just damaging the liver. Drinking also can weaken the immune system, slow healing, impair bone formation, increase the risk of HIV transmission and hinder recovery from burns, trauma, bleeding and surgery.

Researchers released the latest findings on such negative effects of alcohol during a meeting Nov. 19 of the Alcohol and Immunology Research Interest Group, held at Loyola University Medical Center.

At Loyola, about 50 faculty members, technicians, post-doctoral fellows and students are conducting alcohol research. Studies at Loyola and other centers could lead to therapies to boost the immune system or otherwise minimize the effects of alcohol, said Elizabeth J. Kovacs, PhD, director of Loyola's Alcohol Research Program and associate director of Loyola's Burn & Shock Trauma Institute.

"Of course, the best way to prevent the damaging effects of alcohol is to not drink in the first place," Kovacs said. "But it is very difficult to get people to do this."

Sessions at the conference included Alcohol and Infection, Alcohol and Oxidative Stress and Alcohol and Organ Inflammation. Findings were presented by researchers from centers around the country, including Loyola, Cleveland Clinic, University of Iowa, University of Colorado, University of Massachusetts, Mississippi State University, Chicago State University and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA).

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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