

Are there differences in mortality among wine consumers and other alcoholic beverages?

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Wine consumers, especially in comparison with spirits drinkers, have been shown to have higher levels of education and income, to consume a healthier diet, be more physically active, and have other characteristics that are associated with better health outcomes. However, epidemiologic studies have been inconsistent in showing that, after adjustment for all associated lifestyle factors, consumers of wine have lower risk of cardiovascular disease and mortality than do consumers of other beverages.

A study based on the long-term follow up of a group of older Americans concluded that the associated [lifestyle habits](#) and environmental factors of wine consumers largely explained their better health outcomes. Forum reviewers were concerned about some of the methodological approaches used, and believed that the data presented in the paper were inadequate to support such a conclusion. This was a small study, had only a single estimate of [alcohol intake](#) (at baseline but not throughout 20 years of follow up), and the authors may have over-adjusted for large differences in [lifestyle factors](#) between what they termed as "low-wine" and "high-wine" consumers. The study did confirm a lower [mortality risk](#) for alcohol consumers than for non-drinkers.

Experimental studies have clearly indicated that the polyphenols and other constituents that are present in wine and some beers have independent protective effects against most [cardiovascular risk factors](#).

Whether or not such advantages are seen among moderate drinkers of wine (or beer) in epidemiologic studies is difficult to determine, as comparisons are not being made between wine, beer, and spirits but between humans who consume one or other such beverage. In almost all populations, drinkers of a specific beverage differ in many ways other than just the type of beverage they consume.

More information: Holahan CJ, Schutte KK, Brennan PL, North RJ, Holahah CK, Moos BS, Moos RH. Wine consumption and 20-year mortality among late-life moderate drinkers. *J Stud Alcohol Drug* 2012; 73: 80.

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