

Heavy drinking may lead to stroke earlier in life

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A new study shows that people who have three or more alcoholic drinks per day may be at higher risk for experiencing a stroke almost a decade and a half earlier in life than those who do not drink heavily. The research is published in the September 11, 2012, print issue of *Neurology*.

"Heavy drinking has been consistently identified as a risk factor for this type of stroke, which is caused by bleeding in the brain rather than a blood clot," said study author Charlotte Cordonnier, MD, PhD, with the University of Lille Nord de France in Lille, France. "Our study focuses on the effects of heavy alcohol use on the timeline of stroke and the long-term outcome for those people."

For the study, 540 people with an average age of 71 who had a type of stroke called intracerebral hemorrhage were interviewed about their drinking habits. Doctors also interviewed the participants or the caregivers or relatives about the participants' drinking habits. A total of 137 people, or 25 percent, were heavy drinkers, which was defined as having three or more drinks per day, or about 1.6 ounces per day of "pure" alcohol.

Participants also underwent CT [brain scans](#) and their medical records were reviewed.

The study found that heavy drinkers experienced a stroke at an average age of 60, 14 years before the average age of their non-heavy drinking

counterparts. Among people younger than 60 who had a stroke that occurred in the deep part of the brain, heavy drinkers were more likely to die within two years of the study follow-up than non-[heavy drinkers](#).

"It's important to keep in mind that drinking large amounts of alcohol contributes to a more severe form of stroke at a younger age in people who had no significant past medical history," said Cordonnier.

Provided by American Academy of Neurology

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