

Drinking alcohol to lower the risk of venous thrombosis?

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Wine and beer in moderate doses may protect against venous thrombosis, but consumption of more than 14 standard drinks per week increases the risk of the same condition, in particular pulmonary embolism, in both men and women, found Marianne Tang Severinsen, PhD, Senior Consultant, Department of Hematology, Aalborg University Hospital, Denmark, whose paper is published in *Thrombosis and Haemostasis* this month.

When asked why she and her colleagues did the Danish follow-up study, the researcher explained that while it is well established that low to [moderate drinking](#) is associated with a lower risk of arterial thrombosis, data on its effect on [venous thromboembolism](#) are limited and the results are inconsistent. Yet venous thromboembolism, deep-vein thrombosis and [pulmonary embolism](#) are multifactorial diseases that share several risk factors with arterial thrombosis such as age, obesity and smoking. It was assumed that alcohol consumption may reduce the risk of idiopathic venous thromboembolism because it exerts anti-thrombotic effects by decreasing platelet aggregation, increasing tissue plasminogen activator levels and lowering fibrinogen levels. Heavy drinking, however, may provoke venous thromboembolism if mediated through cancer.

"We aimed to assess the association between venous thromboembolism and average daily [alcohol intake](#), types of alcohol, and alcohol drinking patterns in men and women," she said. The study involved 27,178 men and 29,876 women and the median follow-up time was 10.2 years.

The paper's main conclusions in a nutshell - The findings of the study were significant for men but not for women: There may be a small protective effect of [moderate alcohol consumption](#) on the risk of venous thrombosis in men who drink between four to 14 drinks per week. Apparently they have a lower risk of venous thrombosis than those who consume more or less liquor. When beer and [wine drinkers](#) were compared with each other in regard to total alcohol consumption, no differences in risks were found. Wine and beer drinkers alike benefitted from a small beneficial effect of moderate alcohol intake. Thus the authors concluded that either wine or beer in moderate doses seems to protect against venous thromboses in men. Yet intake of more than 14 standard drinks per week should be avoided.

More information: Gaborit FS, Overvad K, Nørgaard M, et al. Alcohol intake and risk of Venous Thromboembolism: A Danish Follow-up Study. *Thromb Haemost* 2013; 110: 39-45.
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Provided by Schattauer

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