

Brain scans show long-term effects of heavy drinking

January 5 2016, by Allie Shah, Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

Something to mull over: New technology reveals how excessive drinking causes lasting damage to your brain.

Multiple studies using [brain scans](#) show chronic heavy drinking causes shrinking of the brain's [frontal cortex](#) - the home of higher-order thinking skills. Brain scans also reveal reduced white matter, which controls inhibitions, according to the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

The upshot: the longer and more a person drinks, the worse his or her ability to make judgments and control impulses.

The NIAAA notes that some of the damage can be reversed with sobriety, but other changes appear to be permanent.

How much is too much alcohol? The risk of developing serious health issues related to drinking is low for men who consume no more than 14 drinks a week or four on a single day, the NIAAA says. For women, the danger is low if you have no more than seven drinks a week or three on a given day.

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Citation: Brain scans show long-term effects of heavy drinking (2016, January 5) retrieved 25 April 2024 from

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