

# Even moderate alcohol intake may harm people with HIV

February 3 2016, by Ziba Kashef

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Moderate alcohol consumption is more harmful to people with HIV than uninfected individuals, raising the risk of both mortality and other negative health effects, say Yale researchers. Their study is the first to demonstrate the increased harm among patients who have suppressed HIV with modern antiretroviral treatment (ART).

Research has shown that it takes fewer drinks for a person with HIV to feel the effects. However, most prior studies were done on HIV-positive [individuals](#) who had detectable virus. The Yale-led team set out to determine whether the risks associated with alcohol were higher among current patients who are more likely to have the infection under control with ART.

The researchers analyzed data on HIV-positive and uninfected patients from the Veterans Aging Cohort Study (VACS), a large population of individuals receiving care from the Veterans Health Administration, between 2008 and 2012. They examined the association between [alcohol consumption](#) and mortality and other signs of physiologic injury.

They found that HIV-positive individuals were more likely to die and experience physiological harm from alcohol consumption than uninfected individuals. Even consumption of one to two drinks per day was associated with increased risk for people with HIV. The finding was particularly notable because it held true for individuals with suppressed virus, said the researchers.

"It demonstrates that even among people on ART with suppressed viral load, who are much less sick in general, there is still an added effect of alcohol among those individuals than people without HIV," said Amy Justice, professor of general medicine and of public health. "It suggests the threshold for safe alcohol consumption is likely different for people with HIV."

The study was published online by *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*.

**More information:** Amy C. Justice et al. Risk of mortality and physiologic injury evident with lower alcohol exposure among HIV infected compared with uninfected men, *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* (2016). [DOI: 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2016.01.017](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2016.01.017)

Provided by Yale University

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