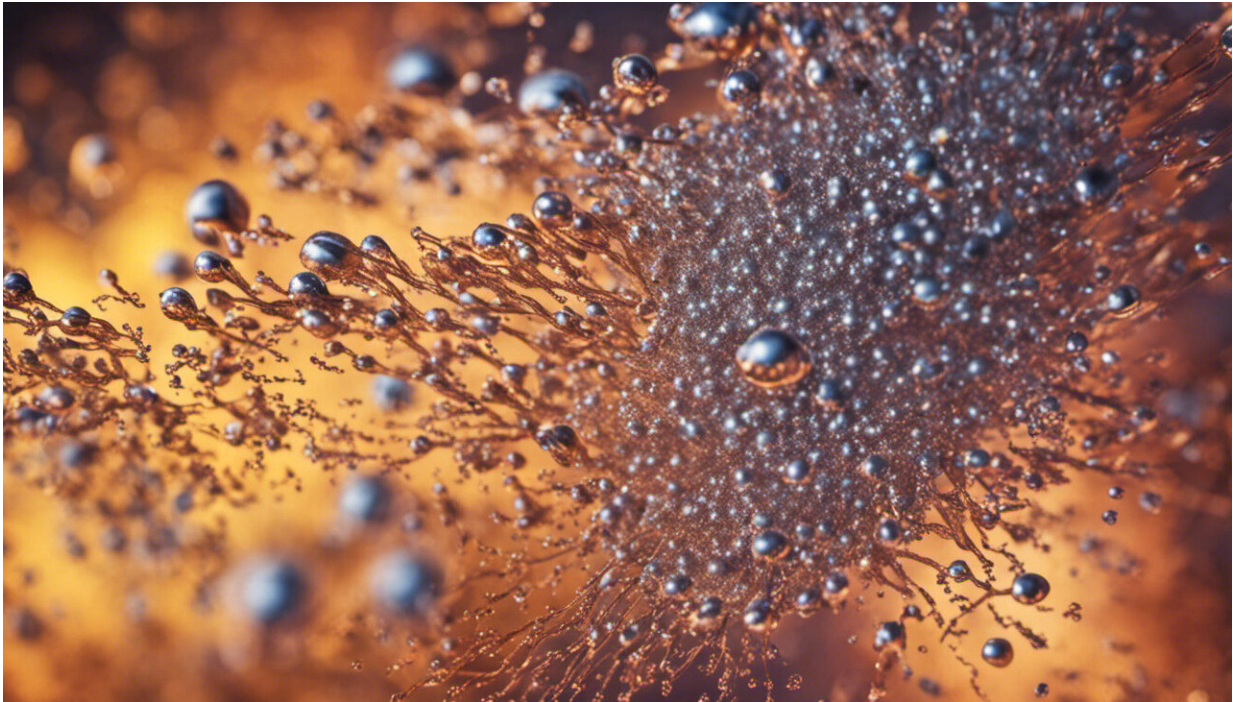


# Is beer good for you?

August 16 2018, by Mayur Ranchordas

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

A recent [Daily Mail article](#) announced that: "Beer is officially good for you". The article claimed that beer "reduces heart risk" and "improves brain health". Even if "heart risk" sounds a bit vague, the news sounds good.

But let's take a closer look at the evidence. The Daily Mail cites the source of the research as The American Journal of the Medical Sciences.

The journalist even provides a quote from the [study](#), which was published in 2000: "The antioxidant content of [beer](#) is equivalent to that of wine, but the specific antioxidants are different because the barley and hops used in the production of beer contain flavonoids different from those in the grapes used in the production of wine."

The Daily Mail article goes on to say that beer can help to reduce the risk of developing diabetes and [heart disease](#), it can protect cognitive function and it can boost levels of high-density lipoprotein (so-called good cholesterol) – although it's not clear if the journalist is citing the study at this point or a nutritionist.

Before we look at whether or not beer is good for your health, we first need to look at what's in beer.

Beer is made from four primary ingredients: grain (mainly barley, but it could be other grains), hops, yeast and water. Table 1 provides a summary of the nutrients found in a 330ml serving of beer.

Beer also contains micronutrients called polyphenols. Some of these polyphenols, such as [flavanoids](#), [flavanols](#) and [phenolic acids](#), have known [health benefits](#), although a lot of the research has focused on [wine](#), not beer.

Nutritional Information	Amount	% of Recommend Amount per day
Calories	153 kcal	-
Alcohol	13.9 g	-
Protein	1.6 g	-
Carbohydrate	12.6 g	-
Fat	0.0 g	-
Cholesterol	0.0 g	-
Calcium	14 mg	1%
Magnesium	21 mg	6.6%
Phosphorous	50mg	7.1%
Potassium	96 mg	6.0%
Sodium	14 mg	1.0%
Niacin	2 mg	5.7%
Folate	21 mg	5.2%

Table 1: The nutrition information of beer. Credit: Mayur Ranchordas, Author provided

But what about the specific health claims made in the article? Does beer really reduce "heart risk"? Most studies on beer suggest that low to moderate consumption could reduce the risk of [heart disease](#). The reported effects are similar to those found in wine.

The Daily Mail [article](#) also claims that beer can "boost [brain health](#)", although the evidence for this is somewhat shaky. A recent [study](#) that tracked 550 men and women over the course of 30 years, concluded that alcohol consumption, even at moderate levels, is associated with negative changes in the brain.

## Alcohol and mortality

Previous alcohol studies showed a [J-shaped relationship](#) between alcohol consumption and [mortality](#), suggesting slightly higher mortality for teetotallers, slightly reduced mortality for light and moderate drinkers, then an increase in mortality for heavy drinkers. However, the latest research, using more complete data, suggests that the relationship between alcohol and mortality is actually [linear](#) – the more alcohol you drink, the more likely you are to die prematurely. The only age group for whom moderate [alcohol consumption](#) still seems to be associated with reduced mortality are women over the age of 65.

It should be noted that the UK guideline for alcohol intake is [14 units](#) for men and women, which equals about five pints of a 5% [alcohol](#) beer per week.

Ultimately, the healthy properties found in beer such as flavanoids, flavanols and phenolic acids can also be obtained from non-alcoholic plant-based food and drinks. So don't be fooled by the eye-catching headlines; beer may have some [health](#) benefits, but that doesn't mean it's the healthiest way to obtain those benefits.

It should also be noted that the study quoted by the Daily Mail concluded: "There is no evidence to support endorsement of one type of alcoholic beverage over another."

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