

Licence to Swill: James Bond's drinking over six decades

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He may be licensed to kill but fictional British secret service agent James Bond has a severe alcohol use disorder, according to an analysis of his drinking behaviour published in the *Medical Journal of Australia's*

Christmas issue.

The researchers analysed 24 Bond movies produced between 1962 and 2015, and found the secret agent has been [drinking](#) heavily and consistently over six decades.

Despite his preference for martinis (shaken, not stirred), the researchers found Bond was ready to drink any alcoholic beverage that was available, from neat vodka to champagne – even occasionally beer.

Bond frequently engaged in hazardous activities while under the influence, the researchers found.

"Chronic risks include frequently drinking prior to fights, driving vehicles (including in chases), high stakes gambling, operating complex machinery or devices, contact with dangerous animals, extreme athletic performance and sex with enemies, sometimes with guns or knives in the bed," lead author Professor Nick Wilson of the University of Otago, Wellington, says.

Dangerous animals he has dealt with after drinking include a snake, a scorpion and a komodo dragon.

Neither does 007 shy away from performing complex tasks after indulging. This was illustrated graphically in the 1962 movie *Dr. No* in which Bond operates nuclear power plant machinery, destroys (virtually single handedly) Dr. No's nuclear/space complex, kills Dr. No, rescues Honey Ryder and escapes the island.

Professor Wilson says there are many problematic aspects to Bond's drinking behaviour, with one binge drinking episode involving six 'Vespers,' a gin and vodka-based cocktail. This equates to 24 units of alcohol that would produce a blood alcohol level that is well into the

known fatal range. But this was low compared to his drinking in one of the James Bond books at 50 units of alcohol in one day, "a level of consumption which would kill nearly everyone."

A Vesper cocktail differs from Bond's usual 'shaken, not stirred' vodka [martini](#), in that it has a base of both gin and vodka, and substitutes Kina Lillet for vermouth and lemon peel for an olive. The recipe was given by Bond to a barman in the 2006 movie *Casino Royale*.

"Other notable features include a medical scan that showed his liver was 'not too good' and a MI6 report on Bond that stated, 'alcohol and substance addiction indicated.'"

While ideally, Bond should seek professional help for his drinking, the authors suggest a few strategies which may minimise his risks in the short term. These include avoiding drinking on the job, especially when tackling [complex tasks](#) such as aerial combat in helicopter gunships and de-activating [nuclear weapons](#), and saying no to social drinks with sexual partners who may want to disable, capture or kill him (that is nine out of 60 of them to date, or 15 per cent).

They also advise Bond to cultivate alternative interests beyond alcohol, perhaps developing his nascent interest in lepidopterology (the study of moths and butterflies), revealed when he discussed M's butterfly collection in one movie.

James Bond has been subject to extensive research, with scientists publishing articles in scholarly journals about his smoking, violent behaviour and psychopathology – including what one author called a "dark triad" of abnormal psychology but this is the first such study of [alcohol](#) in all the Bond movies over six decades.

The article was awarded joint first prize in the *Medical Journal of*

Australia's 2018 Christmas competition.

More information: Nick Wilson et al. Licence to swill: James Bond's drinking over six decades, *The Medical Journal of Australia* (2018).

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