

The relationship between lifetime drinking and non-fatal acute myocardial infarction

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New research from the Prevention Research Center of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation suggests that the impact of alcohol consumption on coronary heart disease may be underestimated.

Although much of the literature to date on the subject suggests that risk is lower among current moderate drinkers than nondrinkers or heavy drinkers, the relationship between lifetime patterns of alcohol consumption and [coronary heart disease](#) remains unclear.

In this new retrospective case-control study, the researchers examined people hospitalized for heart attacks in western New York from 1996—2001 and interviewed them regarding their lifetime [drinking](#) patterns.

The results showed:

- Two distinct lifetime drinking trajectories: an early peak trajectory and a stable trajectory.
- Compared to stable lifetime drinking trajectories, early peak trajectories were characterized by less healthy drinking patterns: earlier onset of regular drinking, less frequent drinking, higher numbers of drinks per drinking day, more frequent drunkenness per drinking year, and reduction of alcohol intake or abstinence by middle age.
- Heart attack rates were higher among early peak drinkers compared to stable lifetime drinkers for both male and female

former drinkers and current female drinkers.

Key takeaways from this new research include:

- Binge drinking during adolescence and [early adulthood](#) may have [long-term effects](#) on the cardiovascular system that have not been recognized by previous epidemiological studies that only began assessing alcohol intake in people ages 35 years and older.
- Epidemiological research suggesting that moderate drinking has a protective effect on cardiovascular health needs to be reevaluated taking drinking during adolescence and emerging adulthood into consideration.

Says lead author, Dr. Marcia Russell: "This is the first time that drinking trajectories covering the entire lifespan, including adolescence and emerging adulthood, have been investigated with respect to nonfatal heart attacks."

More information: Marcia Russell et al, Lifetime Drinking Trajectories and Nonfatal Acute Myocardial Infarction, *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* (2019). [DOI: 10.1111/acer.14190](https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.14190)

Provided by Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation

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