

Low-to-moderate drinking may protect cognition during aging

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(HealthDay)—Low-to-moderate alcohol consumption may be associated

with better global cognition scores among middle-aged and older adults, according to a study recently published in *JAMA Network Open*.

Ruiyuan Zhang, M.D., from the University of Georgia College of Public Health in Athens, and colleagues used data from the Health and Retirement Study, which assessed cognitive functions in 19,887 participants (mean age, 61.8 years; 60.1 percent women) in 1996 through 2008 to assess associations between [alcohol consumption](#) and cognitive function. Participants were grouped into two cognitive function trajectories for each cognition measure assessed: a consistently low trajectory (representing low cognitive scores throughout the study period) and a consistently high trajectory (representing high cognitive scores throughout the study period).

The researchers found that low-to-moderate drinking (fewer than eight drinks per week for women and fewer than 15 for men) was significantly associated with a consistently high cognitive function trajectory and a lower rate of cognitive decline. A consistently low trajectory for total cognitive function, mental status, word recall, and vocabulary was less likely for low-to-moderate drinkers versus never drinkers. Furthermore, low-to-moderate drinking was associated with decreased annual rates of total cognitive function decline, mental status, word recall, and vocabulary compared with never drinkers. In White participants, low-to-moderate [drinking](#) was associated with lower odds of having a consistently low trajectory (odds ratio, 0.65; 95 percent confidence interval, 0.56 to 0.75); however, this was not so for Black individuals (odds ratio, 1.02; 95 percent confidence interval, 0.74 to 1.39). The investigators observed a U-shaped association between dosage of alcohol consumed and all cognitive function domains for all participants, with an optimal dose of 10 to 14 drinks per week.

"Our study contributed further evidence that among a nationally representative sample of middle-aged or [older adults](#), low-to-[moderate](#)

[drinking](#) was associated with the protection of cognitive functions that may decrease with age," the authors write.

More information: [Abstract/Full Text](#)

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