Avoiding alcohol helps the heart beat better

October 19 2017

(HealthDay)—The longer you refrain from drinking, the lower your risk of a common heart rhythm disorder.

That's the message of a new long-range study examining alcohol use and atrial fibrillation, or Afib. This is when electrical impulses in the upper chambers of the heart are chaotic and cause an irregular heartbeat, which increases the risk of blood clots that can cause stroke or heart attacks.

One in four adults older than 40 is at risk for Afib, and nearly 6 million people in the United States could have the condition by 2050.

But the researchers from the University of California, San Francisco found that every decade of non-drinking decreased the risk of Afib by 20 percent, regardless of the type of alcohol.

The study included heart-risk data generated over 25 years on more than 15,000 American adults.

Past drinkers were at increased risk for Afib, the researchers found. Every additional decade in which alcohol was consumed in the past was associated with a 13 percent increased risk of Afib, and every additional drink per day during former drinking was associated with a 4 percent increased risk.

"For a disease that affects millions and is one of the most important causes of stroke, identifying modifiable risk factors is especially important," study senior author Dr. Gregory Marcus said in a UCSF news release. He directs clinical research at the university's division of cardiology.

"Future research may help identify patients particularly prone to alcohol-related [Afib], and, when done, targeted counseling to those patients may be especially effective," he added.

"Our finding suggests there may be chronic cardiac remodeling effects from alcohol that don't rely on alcohol as an acute trigger, and further

research into why this occurs is needed," Marcus concluded.

The findings were published online Oct. 18 in the journal *PLOS ONE*.

More information: The U.S. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute has more on atrial fibrillation.

Copyright © 2017 HealthDay. All rights reserved.

Citation: Avoiding alcohol helps the heart beat better (2017, October 19) retrieved 24 April 2024 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-10-alcohol-heart.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.