

Cheers To Your Health: Heart-Healthy News

by David K. Rehr, Ph.D.

(NAPSA)—Feeling guilty about that second helping that you washed down with your favorite beer? Well cheer up; at least part of your meal may have been good for you. Medical research continues to show that moderate beer consumption may actually be beneficial to your health.



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Several years ago, medical research made headlines with studies showing positive health benefits for those who consume wine in moderation. And with just cause: the story of the French Paradox—that the French people can at the same time have one of the world’s most high-fat diets, and lowest rates of coronary heart disease, presumably because of the amount of red wine that they drink—was good news to red wine drinkers everywhere.

But there’s more to this story. Further medical research confirms that it is not just red wine, but many forms of alcohol that can produce positive health effects. Beer, in particular, has emerged as a possible source of health protection when consumed in moderation. Besides heart disease and stroke, medical studies have linked moderate beer consumption to a reduction in the risk of dementia and type 2 diabetes.

Numerous studies show that beer offers possible protection against heart attack, stroke, hypertension and dementia. New evidence now suggests that beer



Medical research is finding that moderate beer consumption may be good for you.

may also help increase bone density and decrease risk of fracture.

There are several potential biological mechanisms that beer offers to help protect against diseases, but they are not all clearly understood. Beer consumption has been shown to raise HDL cholesterol—the “good” cholesterol—by 10 to 20 percent. Beer has also been found to decrease arterial stiffness, improve clotting factors and provide antioxidants that help protect blood vessels. The B-vitamins in beer may also play a role in controlling the risk of heart disease. These same benefits to the heart and blood vessels are thought by some scientists to help prevent diseases that afflict the

mind later in life, such as Alzheimer’s and general dementia.

Reviews of more than 30 major medical studies that examine alcohol intake and disease risk factors confirm that alcohol offers protection against several of the top 10 major causes of death, including heart disease, stroke and diabetes. Among men and women who drink moderately, type 2 diabetes is reduced by one-third to one-half, compared to non-drinkers. Alcohol’s preventive effects for diabetes may be due to increasing insulin sensitivity and helping to control body weight.

Now, does this research suggest that you consume a six-pack a night to stay heart-healthy? Of course not. The key to all of this is moderate consumption by adults of legal drinking age. In fact, these same studies show that people who drink to excess are actually increasing their risk of certain diseases. This is a point that cannot be overstressed as more positive news about moderate beer consumption is confirmed.

But, adults who enjoy an ice-cold Pilsner or savor the chocolate taste of Stout should know the good news that your favorite beverage may also be good for you. Before making dietary changes concerning beer or other alcohol, seek the advice of a physician or registered dietitian.

David K. Rehr, Ph.D. is President of the National Beer Wholesalers Association, an organization representing more than 2,200 independent beer wholesalers before government and the public.