

# Alcohol consumption and risk of heart failure

Alcohol is a known cardiac toxin and heavy consumption can lead to heart failure (HF). However, the relationship between moderate alcohol consumption and risk for HF, in either men or women, remains unclear.

This study looked at 14,629 participants without Heart Failure (1987-89) who were followed for  $24 \pm 1$  years. Overall, most participants were abstainers (42%) or former drinkers (19%), with 25% reporting up to 7 drinks per week, 8% reporting  $\geq 7$  to 14 drinks per week, and 3% reporting  $\geq 14-21$  and  $\geq 21$  drinks per week, respectively.

Heart Failure occurred in 1271 men and 1237 women. Men consuming up to 7 drinks/week had reduced risk of HF relative to abstainers; this effect was less robust in women. In the higher drinking categories, the risk of HF was not significantly different from abstainers, either in men or in women.

In the community, alcohol consumption of up to 7 drinks/week at early-middle age is associated with lower risk for future HF, with a similar but less definite association in women than in men. These findings suggest that despite the dangers of heavy drinking, modest alcohol consumption in early-middle age may be associated with a lower risk for HF.

***Editorial:** Alcohol consumption has been a part of society for thousands of years. The negative social and biological effects of excessive alcohol consumption are well known and far from controversial. In contrast there has been a great deal of recent focus on the potential beneficial health effects of red wine. This study drills down on one specific health problem related to alcohol consumption; heart failure. The very interesting result is that consumption of moderate alcohol (7 drinks per week) was somewhat protective against the development of heart failure. This does not mean that alcohol is a treatment for heart failure but does show that moderate consumption is not a risk factor.*

---

## Bibliography

[Gonçalves A<sup>1</sup>](#), [Claggett B<sup>2</sup>](#), [Jhund PS<sup>3</sup>](#), [Rosamond W<sup>4</sup>](#), [Deswal A<sup>5</sup>](#), [Aguilar D<sup>6</sup>](#), [Shah AM<sup>2</sup>](#), [Cheng S<sup>2</sup>](#), [Solomon SD<sup>7</sup>](#).

[Eur Heart J](#). 2015 Apr 14;36(15):939-45.