

## Could an Appletini a Day Keep the Doctor Away?

By: Caroline Olson



### **The Math**

Back in the day (ok, in 1992) recommendations for alcohol consumption in the United Kingdom were given per week (Foster et. al, 2006). These days, the recommendations limit your drinks per day, instead of your drinks per week.

For example, in the past the recommendation would have said something like, “Drink a maximum of 14 drinks per week.” Now it says, “Drink a maximum of two drinks per day.”

Both recommendations set the limit at 14 drinks per week, so why change the rhetoric? What’s the difference, right?

$2 \text{ drinks} \times 7 \text{ days a week} = 14 \text{ drinks per week.}$

Apparently not.

### **The Binge v. The Buzz**

Recent studies looking at the risks and benefits that come with alcohol consumption have a recurring theme: binge drinking (or drinking four or more drinks in one day) is associated with higher risks of multiple types of cancer, stroke, and cardiovascular disease (Åberg et. al, 2017).

So, having four or more shots in a night is officially not good for you.

However, low to moderate alcohol intake (or 1 drink for women and 1-2 for men) is associated with lower risks of cardiovascular disease and overall death, particularly for people who drink more than 2 days a week (Bagnardi et. al, 2008). An intensive review of studies looking at longevity and alcohol consumption also found that people who did *not* drink regularly but had episodes of binge drinking, were actually at a higher risk of heart disease when compared with those who conversely drank moderately on a regular basis and avoided drinking in excess.

So, what does this mean in real life?

This means that taking a glass of wine with your lunch or dinner can be both enjoyable and healthful. This means that you don't need to feel guilty about that glass of brandy with dessert.

In fact, light drinking throughout the week *may* even better for you than not drinking at all.

But remember: 1 drink a day for women and 1-2 drinks a day for men.

An appletini a day, folks. Even on the weekends. Seriously.

### **The Catch**

While drinking a glass of wine or two a day may be good for your heart, *it is also associated with higher rates of certain cancers*. Any alcohol consumption, even in low quantities, is a risk factor for mouth, pharynx, oesophagus, breast bowel and liver cancers (World Cancer Research Fund, 2007).

For example, some scientists estimate that a woman who frequently binge drinks four or more drinks in a night is twice as likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer, than a non-drinker (Grønbaek, 2009). In other words, if breast cancer runs in your family, drinking alcohol for its protective effect on cardiac health -- even in moderation -- may not be worth the increased risk of breast cancer.

It's also important to know that alcoholism is at least partly genetic (Edwards et. al, 2017). If someone in your family has a tendency to abuse alcohol, you might also have that tendency. The good that alcohol *might* do -- may not be worth the risk of developing alcoholism.

### **This Is For You New Drinkers**

Your diet is personal; it is emotional; and it should be enjoyable -- and alcohol can be part of it! But before you dive headfirst into a sea of mimosas and cabernet, remember that sometimes less is more. Learn to love to buzz of one or two drinks a day, because more than four drinks on any day is not healthy under any circumstances.

Talk to your parents about your family's history with drinking.

Is Uncle Al a closet alcoholic? Did Aunt Emily die of breast cancer?

Mix up an appletini and weigh the pros and cons of alcohol, together.

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