Humans have been consuming fermented beverages for around 10,000 years. For much of this time, the pros and cons of alcohol consumption have also been up for debate. The mixed messages continue today. Is alcohol good or bad for you? The answer depends on many factors. All people react to alcohol differently. How we react to alcohol is influenced by many factors: age, race or ethnicity, weight, fitness level, how quickly the alcohol was consumed, amount of food consumed before the alcohol, and the list continues. One thing is for certain, excessive alcohol consumption is not healthy. If we are drinking alcohol for its proposed health benefits, we must do so in moderation.

So what defines “moderate” alcohol consumption? What are its benefits? What are the dangers if we drink too much? These topics and more are the focus of this week’s newsletter.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

1. What constitutes moderate alcohol consumption?
2. What are its benefits?
3. What are the risks of drinking too heavily?
DID YOU KNOW…?

The lines on SOLO cups are actually measurements! These can help you make sure that you are not over-consuming alcohol. There is a line for each type of alcohol. There’s 12oz for beer, 5oz for wine, and 1oz for liquor. Whether this was intentional or happy coincidence, it will help you track your alcohol intake.

WHAT IS “MODERATE” ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION?

Most studies define moderate alcohol consumption by gender: 1 drink per day for women and 2 drinks per day for men. What constitutes “a drink” though? This depends on what you are drinking. “A drink” is usually considered to be 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of hard liquor (vodka, gin, whiskey, etc.). At this level of alcohol consumption, most studies show that the benefits of alcohol clearly outweigh the risks.

However, it is important to remember that no guidelines recommend a person start drinking alcohol for its proposed benefits. So what are the benefits?
Health Benefits from Moderate Alcohol Consumption:

The connection between moderate alcohol consumption and lower risk of cardiovascular disease has been shown in men and women. Moderate amounts of alcohol raise the “good cholesterol” or high-density lipoprotein (HDL). This type of cholesterol protects us against heart disease by carrying the cholesterol away from our arteries. Moderate alcohol consumption has also been linked with beneficial changes, ranging from better sensitivity to insulin to improvements in factors that influence blood clotting. Such changes would tend to prevent the formation of small blood clots that can block arteries in the heart, neck, and brain, the ultimate cause of many heart attacks and the most common kind of stroke. The benefits, however, do not stop at the heart. Studies show alcohol in moderation can lead to a person being less likely to develop gallstones and type 2 diabetes. Not to mention, a glass of alcohol with friends can be a way to relax. These stress-relieving effects can attribute to better health. Studies also show, its not what you drink, but how you drink that matters. 7 drinks on a Friday night is not the same as

When do the risks outweigh the benefits?

- You’re pregnant or trying to become pregnant
- You’ve been diagnosed with alcoholism or alcohol abuse, or you have a strong family history of alcoholism
- You have liver or pancreatic disease
- You have heart failure or you've been told you have a weak heart
- You take prescription or over-the-counter medications that can interact with alcohol
- You've had a hemorrhagic stroke (when a blood vessel in your brain leaks or ruptures)
WHAT ARE THE DANGERS ASSOCIATED WITH HEAVY DRINKING?

Not everyone can stop drinking after 1 drink. Persistent heavy drinking can take a toll on the body and cause many negative adverse health effects. Heavy drinking has been linked to pancreatitis, liver damage, high blood pressure, cardiomyopathy, and even certain cancers. Additionally, alcohol’s ability to cloud one’s judgment is legendary.

Keeping the risks in mind will help you make an informed decision whether moderate alcohol consumption is right for you. You should never feel pressured to drink alcohol. If you have any questions, make sure to talk to your healthcare provider.

REFERENCES:


