**Regular exercise could eliminate risk of alcohol related illness**

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The wealthiest Scots are drinking the most dangerous levels of alcohol, with 35 per cent of the richest households consuming hazardous amounts of drink compared to 18 per cent of the poorest households.

**Regular exercise could cancel out the risk of death from serious illnesses linked to alcohol, research has shown.**

A study found that moderate physical activity counteracts the “biological disease pathways” of high alcohol intake, which can lead to fatal heart disease, stroke and several types of cancer.

Researchers, who have described this as the first study of its kind, examined alcohol consumption and exercise among participants aged over 40, and compared the results with national health surveys from England and Scotland dating back to 1994.

Results showed that those who did regular physical activity and drank between recommended and harmful levels had a reduced risk of death from all causes associated with alcohol.

In some cases, the exercise even appeared to cancel out the risk completely.

Those who only drank occasionally were also at lower risk.

However, people who drank the same amount and did less than the minimum recommended amount of physical activity (150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity a week) were found to be more at risk of death, especially from cancer.

Although the study was not conclusive and did not take into account drinking habits or other dietary factors, it shows that exercise can curb some of the harmful effects of drinking, according to researchers.

The study said: “Our results provide an additional argument for the role of (physical activity) as a means to promote the health of the population even in the presence of other less healthy behaviours.

“The public health relevance of our results is further emphasised by the recently updated alcohol consumption guidelines review by the UK chief medical officer that found that cancer mortality risk starts from a relatively low level of alcohol consumption.”

The study, published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, said that one in four respondents met the higher weekly target for exercise, while just over 60 per cent did not meet the minimum recommended amount.

Just under 15% did not drink at all, while 13 per cent drank more than the daily recommended maximum, when it was classified as more than 35 units per week for women and 49 units for men.

Head of health information at the World Cancer Research Fund, Sarah Toule, said: “We would not recommend that anyone sees these findings as a “get out of jail free card”, as alcohol does increase the risk of many different health conditions including cancer.

“Doing more physical activity can have great health benefits and our own evidence shows that, if everyone in the UK was regularly active, about 12,000 cancer cases could be prevented every year. However, by not drinking alcohol, 24,000 cancer cases could be avoided.”