**Moderate drinking can protect you only from some heart conditions, not all**

[**HEALTH AND FITNESS**](http://www.hindustantimes.com/health-and-fitness/) Updated: Mar 24, 2017 10:20 IST

Agence France-Presse

People who drink moderately are less likely to experience most (but not all) cardiovascular conditions, as compared to those who abstain from alcohol.

A new large British study has found that moderate drinking is associated with a lower risk of some — but not all — cardiovascular diseases.

Carried out by researchers from the University of Cambridge and University College London, the study investigated a possible association between alcohol consumption and 12 cardiovascular diseases.

Although a moderate intake of alcohol has been linked previously with a lower risk of developing cardiovascular disease compared with abstinence or heavy drinking, some believe that previous research is flawed.

For their new large-scale study the team used electronic health records for over 1.93 million healthy UK adults taken from the CALIBER (ClinicAl research using LInked Bespoke studies and Electronic health Records) data resource.

None of the participants suffered from any cardiovascular disease at the start of the study, and non-drinkers were separated from former and occasional drinkers for extra clarity.

After taking into account several influential factors, the results showed that those who drank moderately were less likely to experience several, but not all, cardiovascular conditions, including angina, heart failure and ischaemic stroke, compared to those who abstained from alcohol.

However heavy drinking, defined as exceeding recommended limits, was associated with an increased risk of certain cardiovascular diseases, including heart failure, cardiac arrest and ischaemic stroke when compared with moderate drinking but was linked with a lower risk of heart attack and angina.

In the UK, moderate drinking is defined as no more than 14 units (112 grams) of alcohol a week, with one unit equal to half a pint of ordinary strength beer, lager or cider (3.6% alcohol by volume) or a small pub measure (25 ml) of spirits. There are one and a half units of alcohol in a small glass (125 ml) of ordinary strength wine (12% alcohol by volume).

The authors point out that they are not encouraging individuals to take up drinking as a way of lowering their cardiovascular risk, and that there are safer and more effective ways to do so such as increasing physical activity and stopping smoking.

As an observational study the team also noted that no firm conclusions can be made about cause and effect, and some of the study’s limitations could have also introduced bias.

However the study marks the first time that this association has been investigated on such a large scale and the findings still have important implications for patient counseling, public health communication and disease prediction tools.

In a linked editorial, researchers at Harvard Medical School and Johns Hopkins School of Public Health in the US add that the research could pave the way for further, even larger studies to give a better understanding of the topic for public health and clinical care.

The results can be found online published by The BMJ.