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**Moderate drinking may be ‘heart healthy’ but exercise is safer**

By **New Scientist staff and Press Association**

Once again, a study has confirmed that moderate drinking might be good for the heart – but this benefit vanishes if you drink more than seven pints of lager or equivalent a week.

The latest study analysed data from 1.93 million people in the UK, and found that moderate drinkers – who consume [14 units or less a week](https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn28742-bottle-and-a-half-of-wine-is-new-uk-weekly-alcohol-limit/) – were less likely to have angina, heart attacks, and heart failure. They were also less likely to have circulation problems caused by fat in their arteries, aortic aneurysms, and ischaemic strokes – the most common kind of stroke.

But drinking more than 14 units – which is approximately seven medium-sized glasses of red wine – a week was found to increase the risk of heart failure, cardiac arrest, ischaemic stroke, and circulation problems.

The researchers behind the study have said that it could be unwise to encourage people to take up drinking to lower their health risks, saying that there are arguably safer and more effective ways to protect cardiovascular health – such as doing more exercise and quitting smoking. Because alcohol has been linked to seven types of cancer, some researchers believe [there is no safe level of drinking](https://www.newscientist.com/article/2098269-alcohol-linked-to-at-least-seven-cancers-not-just-liver-cancer/).

“This study suggests that sticking within alcohol guidelines may actually lower your risk of some heart conditions,” says Tracy Parker, of charity the British Heart Foundation, who was not involved in the study. “But it’s important to remember that the risks of drinking alcohol far outweigh any possible benefits. These findings are certainly no reason to start drinking alcohol if you don’t already.”

**Journal reference:***British Medical Journal***,**[DOI: 10.1136/bmj.j909](http://www.bmj.com/content/356/bmj.j909)

Read more: [Good hydrations: Is there a safe level of alcohol?](https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg23231020-600-booze-ruse-can-a-drink-now-and-then-really-boost-your-health/)

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