



Your Health

Alcohol: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly©

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Vocabulary & pronunciation study by Catherine Balter Kendall©

Words are explained alongside the text

Stressed syllables are underlined and in bold*

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Most of us enjoy a glass of wine with dinner, or perhaps a **nightcap** before bed. During this week's article, we'll look at some of the **benefits** alcohol can have on the body, and some of the dangers drinking too much can have.

Depending on whom you ask, drinking can be **a blessing or a curse**. Some people will **dub** drinking as **therapeutic** **whilst** others have had **alcohol** ruin their lives. A cocktail, a beer or a glass of wine can be both relaxing and good for the heart but these drinks can also play a role in cancer **development**, **liver** and heart damage and **depression**.

You may have noticed that alcohol can both be good and bad for the heart, so the question is – why? The answer is actually simple. Alcohol can have positive health effects when drunk in **moderation**. Let's begin by talking about the benefits of alcohol and how it can actually be good for your health.

According to Harvard University, more than 100 studies have shown that **moderate** drinking (which is around 1-2 drinks a day), can decrease the risk of heart attacks, **clot**-caused **strokes** and overall cardiovascular **diseases**. Drinking alcohol in a **reasonable** amount **raises** your levels of HDL, which is also known as your good **cholesterol**. This can decrease your levels of bad cholesterol and prevent high blood pressure. Some **alcoholic** drinks are better at protecting you from cardiovascular diseases than others. Red wine is

nightcap (n.) a drink before you go to bed

a blessing or a curse (exp.) a very good thing or a very bad thing

to dub (vb.) to describe sth. as being a particular way

whilst (conj) whereas

liver (n.) the organ in the body which processes the blood and helps to clean out unwanted substances

clot (n.) a sticky lump that forms when blood dries or becomes thick.

stroke (n.) when a blood vessel in the brain bursts causing damage or even death

to raise (vb.) to increase

famously known to be **particularly** good at reducing your blood pressure. The reason for this is because red wine contains a high **concentration** of a chemical known as polyphenols. These help to decrease blood pressure. Lastly, **on top of** cardiovascular benefits, moderate alcohol **consumption** has been proven to decrease the risk of **developing** dementia. This is because of the cardiovascular effects described earlier. Moderate alcohol **intake** can protect the blood vessels in the brain and heart, which leads to a healthy brain **function**.

Now onto the disadvantages of alcohol: this is almost always due to drinking too much alcohol. Heavy drinking can cause liver **inflammation** and **scarring**. You may have heard of **alcoholic hepatitis** or cirrhosis – this is usually a result of years of excess alcohol consumption. **Interestingly**, whilst drinking alcohol in moderation can decrease blood pressure, excess drinking can actually increase it. High blood pressure can **lead to** heart muscle damage and increase the risk of strokes. **Furthermore**, according to Harvard, high alcohol intake can lead to an increased risk of cancer development. There have been studies **linking** high alcohol intake with breast, colon, mouth and liver cancers. If that wasn't enough, **binge drinking** can also lead to an increased risk of osteoporosis. This is a **condition** where your **bones** become weak and **brittle**. Finally, too much alcohol can also lead to **disrupted** sleep patterns, weight gain and **impeded judgments**.

This week's advice: Even too much water can be bad for you! Remember: everything in moderation.

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on top of (exp.) in addition to

intake (n.) consumption

scarring (n.) replacing of healthy tissue by scar tissue (fibrous connective tissue) which eventually stops the liver from functioning

interestingly (adv.) the interesting thing is...

to lead to (vb.) to have the consequence of

furthermore (conj.) in addition to

to link (vb.) to connect

binge drinking (exp.) drinking very large quantities on alcohol in a short space of time

bone (n.) the hard parts of the body which go to make up the skeleton

brittle (adj.) hard and easily broken

disrupted (adj.) disturbed

impeded judgment (exp.) poor powers of judgment

Tips

Don't forget that words ending in "sion" or "tion" have their main stress on the penultimate syllable:

depression, moderation, concentration, consumption, function, inflammation, condition

Words which come from the same root will often have their main stress on different parts of the word:

alcohol, alcoholic, moderate, moderation