

## Know the Facts

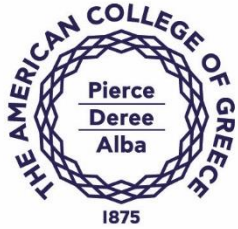
Health



## Drinkwise ACG

You may have heard that moderate alcohol consumption may provide some health benefits, such as reducing your risk of developing and dying from heart disease and possibly reducing your risk of diabetes. That is only a very small part of the story. Eating a healthy diet and being physically active play a much greater role in terms of contributing to our health than consuming a glass of red wine.

While an occasional glass of wine with our dinner isn't a cause of concern and may cause little damage to our health, if the habit grows and we find ourselves unable to stop after one glass then we expose ourselves to the negative effects of cumulative alcohol consumption on our bodies: specifically in the heart, lungs, liver, pancreas, bones, natural immunity and more.



## What does alcohol do to our body

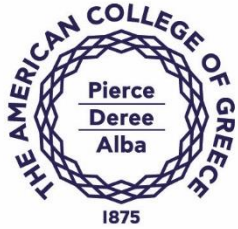
### 1. Alcohol affects our central nervous system.

- Even after one drink we experience its effects on our nervous system: blurred vision, unclear speech, poor physical coordination, balance and reduced reaction time
- It reduces our ability to think clearly and make rational choices.
- Alcohol also makes it difficult for your brain to create long-term memories.
- Chronic and severe alcohol abuse can also cause permanent brain damage.
- Dependency: Drinking heavily may lead to physical and emotional dependency on alcohol leading to addiction. Alcohol withdrawal can be difficult and life-threatening.

### 2. Alcohol affects our digestive system: Stomach, intestine, liver, pancreas

The connection between alcohol consumption and our digestive system may not seem immediately clear. The side effects often only appear after there has been damage. And the more you drink, the greater the damage will become. This is how:

- Alcohol causes irritation of the lining of the stomach and intestinal tract and colon. Chronic drinking may result in inflammation, ulcers and cancer of the intestines and colon. Nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, sweating and loss of appetite are common. Alcohol also impairs small intestine's ability to process nutrients and vitamins.
- It can harm the pancreas by making it produce excessive digestive enzymes which can lead to serious inflammation known as pancreatitis. The pancreas helps regulate our body's insulin use and response to glucose. When our pancreas isn't functioning properly, our body can't manage and balance our blood sugar levels, and we may experience greater complications and side effects related to diabetes. It's important for people with diabetes or hypoglycemia to avoid excessive amounts of alcohol.
- Drinking too much alcohol can also harm the liver which helps break down and remove harmful substances from your body, including alcohol. Long-term alcohol use interferes with this process as well as increases our risk for chronic liver inflammation and liver disease. Women's bodies are more likely to absorb more alcohol and need longer periods of time to process it. Women also show liver damage more quickly than men.



### What does alcohol do to our body

#### 3. Alcohol affects our circulatory system: heart and lungs.

People who are chronic drinkers have a higher risk of heart-related issues. Women who drink are more likely to develop heart disease than men who drink. Specifically: high blood pressure, irregular heartbeat, heart disease, heart attacks & strokes and heart failure.

#### 4. Alcohol affects our skeletal and muscle systems

Long-term alcohol use may cause thinner bones. When bones are not strong we increase our risk for fractures and healing time make take longer. Drinking alcohol may also lead to muscle weakness and cramping.

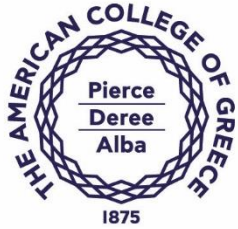
#### 5. Alcohol affects our sexual and reproductive health

One may believe that drinking alcohol can lower our inhibitions and help us have fun in bed. The truth is that is false. Men who drink too much are likely to experience erectile dysfunction. Heavy drinking can also prevent sex hormone production and lower your libido. Women who drink too much may stop menstruating. That puts them at a greater risk for infertility. Women who drink heavily during pregnancy have a higher risk of premature delivery, miscarriage, or stillbirth.

#### 6. Alcohol may cause cancer

Drinking alcohol also increases your risk for several types of cancer, including mouth, breast, and colon.





## How much is too much?

No doubt you have heard that consuming alcohol in moderation has been linked to better heart health. Whether an alcoholic beverage is friendly or hostile to your well-being depends not only on how much you drink but on your current health status as well.

According to Dr. Kenneth Mukamal, Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard-affiliated Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, for some people even light drinking might not be a good thing, depending on what medications they are taking and other factors, while for others it could be beneficial. On the other hand, daily consumption of more than one drink for women and 2 for men may eventually lead to heavy or even binge drinking.

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## Drinking Responsibly *Keep It Moderate*

### Men

Moderate



2 drinks per day

Heavy



4 drinks per day

Binge



5 drinks per day within 2 hours

### Women

Moderate



1 drink per day

Heavy



3 drinks per day

Binge

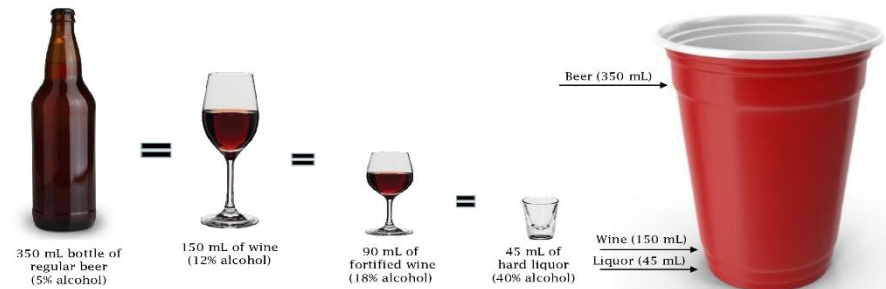


4 drinks per day within 2 hours

1 drink = 1 beer or 0.05 litres of hard liquor

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## STANDARD ALCOHOL LEVELS IN DRINKS



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### Words for the wise

- If you don't drink alcohol, don't start because of *potential* health benefits.
- If you drink a light to moderate amount and you're healthy, you can probably continue as long as you drink responsibly.
- When it comes to the amount a personalized approach is best. Consult your doctor about what's right for your health and safety.
- Not all alcoholic drinks are created equal. Some contain more alcohol than others. You need to consider the portion size. For example, some cocktails may contain an alcohol "dose" equivalent to three standard drinks.
- No alcohol is the correct amount of alcohol if you are driving. The rule of thumb is: If you are driving you are not drinking ☺
- As for our general consumption, we recommend everything in moderation. "Παν μέτρον ἄριστον" *Cleobulus of Lindos (6th century BC.)*



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### Sources & further reading

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