

Alcohol Consumption and Risk for Coronary Heart Disease among Men with Hypertension

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The full report is titled “Alcohol Consumption and Risk for Coronary Heart Disease among Men with Hypertension.” It is in the 2 January 2007 issue of *Annals of Internal Medicine* (volume 146, pages 10-19). The authors are J.W.J. Beulens, E.B. Rimm, A. Ascherio, D. Spiegelman, H.F.J. Hendriks, and K. J. Mukamal.

What is the problem and what is known about it so far?

High blood pressure is a risk factor for heart disease. People who drink moderate amounts of alcohol are less likely to die of heart disease than those who do not drink alcohol. However, some experts think that drinking more than 2 alcoholic drinks per a day increases a person’s risk for high blood pressure.

Why did the researchers do this particular study?

To understand what happens when people with high blood pressure drink alcohol, specifically whether drinking alcohol helps or harms people with high blood pressure.

Who was studied?

11, 711 male health professionals (doctors, dentists, and pharmacists) between 40 and 75 years of age. All participants had high blood pressure at the beginning of the study or developed high blood pressure during the study.

How was the study done?

Every 4 years, the men received a mailed survey that asked questions about what they ate and drank. From the answers, the researchers counted how many alcoholic drinks each man drank per day. Every 2 years, the researchers sent a survey that asked whether the men had experienced a heart attack or stroke. The survey also asked about health problems that are known to increase a person’s risk for heart disease or stroke. The researchers then examined whether men with high blood pressure who also drank alcohol had fewer strokes than men who did not drink alcohol.

What did the researchers find?

Men with high blood pressure who drank 1 to 2 drinks per day had a lower rate of heart attack. The rates of stroke, death from heart disease, and death from any cause were the same for men who drank alcohol in moderation and for men who did not drink alcohol.

What were the limitations of the study?

The researchers studied only male health care providers. It is not known whether the results apply to women or to people with other occupations.

What are the implications of the study?

Men with high blood pressure who drink alcohol in moderation do not have an increased risk for heart attack, stroke, or death from heart disease, and they may have a lower risk for heart attack.