

[IMAGE]

Alcohol: Worse with Age?

Don't wait too long to drink that wine in the cellar. Unlike the way wine gets better with age, a recent study hints that the older you are, the worse alcohol may be for you.

The Japanese study, appearing in *Gerontology*, evaluated the relationship between alcohol consumption and cardiovascular health in over 12,000 male workers 20-69 years old. The men were divided into five age groups, then into three "subgroups" based on alcohol consumption levels: nondrinkers, light drinkers (up to two drinks per day), and heavy drinkers (two or more drinks daily).

Light drinking significantly raised blood pressure in middle-aged and elderly groups (ages 40-69), although not in younger subjects, and only significantly decreased unhealthy cholesterol levels in those younger than 60 years. Heavy drinking at all ages significantly increased blood pressure, despite positively affecting cholesterol levels. In all age groups, light drinking raised "good" HDL cholesterol.

This study raises the often-asked question: Should you drink to your health or not? The results imply that even light drinking may increase blood pressure in older adults, despite its beneficial ability to help prevent other cardiovascular risk factors. One to two drinks daily are acceptable in younger adults, as positive effects on cholesterol may outweigh negative side effects.

Reference:

Wakabayashi I, Kobaba-Wakabayashi R. Effects of age on the relationship between drinking and atherosclerotic risk factors. *Gerontology* 2002;48(3), pp. 151-156.

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