

# No Wine-ing: Moderate Drinking Not So Beneficial After All



By Ana-Marija Dolaskie — March 23, 2016



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In January, health authorities in the United Kingdom [relegated the benefits of red wine on our health](#) [2] to the status of "old wives' tales." Shortly thereafter, researchers in Spain published a [scientific review](#) [3] that produced evidence to the contrary — that red wine may, in fact, hold health benefits after all. And this week — lo and behold, an [analysis of 87 studies](#) [4] squashed the notion that moderate consumption of alcohol (including wine) has any benefit to longevity.

We wish science would make up its mind.

We wish this mostly because having a glass of wine (or a cocktail) with dinner isn't only delicious, it's relaxing and helps us unwind after a long day at work. After all, wine can help prevent memory loss, boost our mood, and even help trim the waistline (it's true, it says so [here in this listicle!](#) [5]).

But wishful thinking aside, the actual evidence that moderate alcohol consumption is beneficial to health is shaky at best, according to Dr. Timothy Naimi, a physician and epidemiologist at Boston Medical Center, in speaking to [NPR](#) [6]. He and colleagues published the analysis in the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, and the findings, he said, "cast a great deal of skepticism on this long, cherished belief that moderate drinking has a survival advantage."

When researchers took a closer look at those studies that had been previously cited in stories that tied moderate drinking to health advantages, many of them were found to be flawed.

The key issue, lead researcher Tim Stockwell, P.h.D., [explained](#) [7], is how those studies defined "abstainers." Some studies combined moderate drinkers (those who have up to two drinks per day) with those who abstain from alcohol — an unfair grouping since the abstainers can include people in poor health who *needed* to cut alcohol consumption. Thus, the findings were skewed in those cases, since it appeared that moderate alcohol consumption may improve health.

Once researchers controlled for this bias, the results showed that moderate drinkers had no health advantage over those who abstain from alcohol. What's more, before the controlled analysis, many studies concluded that it was the occasional drinkers (those who consumed up to one drink per

week) who lived the longest. But that sort of consumption, which borders on homeopathy, is unlikely to lead to longevity.

Though having a drink with dinner won't improve our chances of survival, the research does not imply that moderate drinking (two to three drinks per week) is detrimental to our health.

Well, cheers to that!

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[2] <http://www.winespectator.com/webfeature/show/id/52583>

[3] <http://www.winespectator.com/webfeature/show/id/52852>

[4] <http://www.jsad.com/doi/10.15288/jsad.2016.77.185>

[5] <http://www.firstforwomen.com/posts/10-reasons-you-should-have-a-glass-of-wine-with-every-dinner-73993>

[6] <http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/03/22/471416356/that-cabernet-might-not-be-good-for-your-health-after-all>

[7] [http://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2016-03/joso-imd031616.php](http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2016-03/joso-imd031616.php)