

Nutrition Fact Sheet

Adult Beverage Consumption: *Making Responsible Drinking Choices*

More than 100 million American adults drink beverage alcohol responsibly. For these adults, moderate consumption of beverage alcohol—distilled spirits, beer or wine—can be an acceptable diet and lifestyle choice. Of course, some individuals should not drink alcohol beverages at all.

Those adults who choose to drink alcohol beverages should do so sensibly and in moderation

Moderate drinking is defined by the federal government's *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* as up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men. This limit is based on differences between the sexes in both weight and metabolism. Drinking patterns also appear to be as important as the amount. One to two drinks per day does not mean you can drink a "week's worth" of alcohol over a period of a few hours or a few days. Knowing what is a standard drink helps guide responsible drinking decisions. The following count as one drink:

- 12 fluid ounces of regular beer (144 calories)
- 5 fluid ounces of wine (white wine 100 calories, red wine 105 calories)
- 1.5 fluid ounces of 80 proof distilled spirits (96 calories).

Some people should not drink at all, including:

- Children and adolescents,
- Women of childbearing age who may become pregnant,
- Pregnant and lactating women,

Standard Drinks



Standard Drinks

Each standard drink contains 0.6 fluid ounces (14 grams) of alcohol (ethanol). It is the alcohol in each beverage that is associated with both potential risks and benefits, and has the identical effect on your body whether from beer, wine or distilled spirits. This important fact is taught by the federal government and numerous public health organizations including National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, United States Departments of Transportation, Education, and Health and Human Services; National Consumers League, National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) to guide responsible decisions about drinking.

- Individuals who cannot restrict their alcohol intake,
- Individuals taking medications that can interact with alcohol, and
- Individuals with specific, medical conditions.

Drinking should be avoided by individuals

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engaging in activities that require attention, skill or coordination, such as driving or operating machinery. For a full copy of the *Dietary Guidelines*, go to www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines.

Moderate Drinking and Health

According to the *2005 Dietary Guidelines*, “The consumption of alcohol can have beneficial or harmful effects depending on the amount consumed, age and other characteristics of the person consuming the alcohol, and specifics of the situation.... The lowest all-cause mortality occurs at an intake of one to two drinks per day. The lowest coronary heart disease mortality also occurs at an intake of one to two drinks per day. Morbidity and mortality are highest among those drinking large amounts of alcohol.”

Current scientific research shows:

- Light to moderate beverage alcohol consumption for some age groups may reduce the risk of heart disease, the leading cause of death in the United States.
- The reported potential benefits are associated with the ethanol (alcohol) in *all* beverage alcohol products—distilled spirits, beer or wine. There are also a number of other dietary and lifestyle factors associated with reducing disease.
- Even one drink per day can slightly increase the risk of breast cancer, according to a report from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.
- According to the *Dietary Guidelines* report, moderate drinking does not affect overall diet quality and is not associated with

obesity. Some research suggests that alcohol energy may be used differently than energy from other calories consumed. However, all alcohol drinks contain calories and heavy drinking contributes to weight gain.

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, “Most adults who drink alcohol drink in moderation and are at low risk for developing problems related to their drinking. However, all drinkers, including low-risk drinkers, should be aware of the health risks associated with alcohol consumption.”

Drink Responsibly

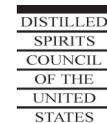
Individuals should not choose to drink alcohol for health reasons. Adults who choose to drink should do so responsibly at all times, and even less-than-heavy alcohol consumption is associated with significant risks. Alcohol abuse can cause serious health and other problems and, as noted in the *Dietary Guidelines*, “The hazards of heavy alcohol consumption are well known...” There is also a body of scientific literature regarding the reported health risks of beverage alcohol consumption generally, and there are warning labels on all alcohol beverage containers sold in the US. The decision whether or not to drink is a personal choice. For anyone under twenty-one years of age, know the law—it is illegal to purchase beverage alcohol if you are underage. As always, potential risks and benefits of drinking—as well as all other health, diet and lifestyle choices—should be discussed with a registered dietitian and/or physician. For more information go to NIAAA at <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov>.

For a referral to a registered dietitian and for additional food and nutrition information visit www.eatright.org



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