

Heavy Drinkers Found to Reduce Drinking with Anti-Epilepsy Drug

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New research shows that an anti-epilepsy drug may help heavy drinkers reduce their alcohol consumption, says *HealthDay*.

In a study that included 138 heavy drinkers, one half took the drug topiramate (Topamax) for 12 weeks at a maximum dose of 200 milligrams a day.

The other half were given an inactive placebo. Both groups had brief counseling to help them decrease their drinking.

At the end of the 12-week study, placebo group patients were five times more likely to have had a heavy drinking day than those in the Topamax group. Also, compared to the placebo group, more than twice as many patients who took the drug had no heavy drinking days during the last four weeks of the study.

In a press release from the University of Pennsylvania, the study's lead author, Henry R. Kranzler, MD, professor of Psychiatry, director of Penn's Center for Studies of Addiction, says that the results represent an important next step in understanding and treating problem drinking. He added, "Our study is the first we are aware of in which topiramate was evaluated as a treatment option for patients who want to limit their drinking to safe levels, rather than stop drinking altogether."

Researchers suggest that this could help lead to personalized treatments for heavy drinkers, as well as additional research to support patients who struggle with heavy drinking.