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Study Finds Increased Death Risk from Binge Drinking Among Older Moderate Drinkers

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A study of moderate drinkers ages 55 to 65 found those who drink large amounts less often have higher death rates, compared with those who drink small amounts more regularly.

The researchers say most studies that examine the potential effects of moderate drinking generally focus on average levels of drinking, instead of overall drinking patterns.

The study by researchers at the University of Texas at Austin looked at drinking patterns of moderate drinkers, comparing whether they spread out their alcohol consumption evenly, or drank less frequently but in larger amounts.

The study included 446 moderate drinkers—men who drank no more than four alcohol beverages a day, and no more than 14 drinks weekly, and women who had no more than three drinks a day, and no more than seven drinks weekly. The researchers found 372 participants spread out their drinking evenly, while 74 had episodes of heavy drinking.

"Among older moderate drinkers, we found that those who binge have double the odds of dying within the next 20 years compared to those who do not binge," lead researcher Charles Holahan told HealthDay.

"Heavy episodic drinking concentrates alcohol's toxicity and is linked to mortality by damaging body organs," said Holahan. He added in a news release, "These findings demonstrate that, among older adults, drinking patterns need to be addressed along with overall consumption in order to understand alcohol's health effects."

The study appears in *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research*.

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