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Men and Women Are Helped Differently by Alcoholics Anonymous

Men and women benefit in different ways from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), a new study suggests.

Men benefit more from avoiding companions who encourage drinking and social situations in which drinking is common, according to Health24. Women benefit from the program by having increased confidence in their ability to avoid alcohol when they feel sad, anxious or depressed.

"Men and women benefit equally from participation in AA, but some of the ways in which they benefit differ in nature and in magnitude," lead researcher John F. Kelly, PhD, of the Massachusetts General Hospital Center for Addiction Medicine said in a news release. "These differences may reflect differing recovery challenges related to gender-based social roles and the contexts in which drinking is likely to occur."

One-third of AA's members are women, the article notes.

The researchers studied more than 1,700 participants in AA, 24 percent of whom were women. They were enrolled in a study called Project MATCH that compared three alcohol addiction treatment approaches. The study tracked participants' success in maintaining sobriety and whether they attended AA meetings. It also evaluated specific measures, such as participants' confidence in their ability to stay sober in certain situations.

In both men and women, AA participation increased confidence in the ability to deal with high-risk drinking situations, and increased the number of social contacts who supported their recovery efforts. For men, the effect of both of those changes on the ability to stay sober was twice as strong, compared with women in the study. Women were much more likely than men to benefit from improved confidence in their ability to stay away from alcohol when they were sad or depressed.

The study appears in *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*.

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