

Moderate Drinkers May Gain Less Weight Than Heavier or Lighter Drinkers



Recent research suggests people who drink moderately—about two glasses a day for men, and one for women—may gain less weight than those who drink heavily or don't drink at all, according to *The Wall Street Journal*.

"People who gain the least weight are moderate drinkers, regardless of [alcoholic] beverage choice," Erik Rimm, Associate Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition at Harvard Medical School, told the newspaper. Rimm, who chaired the 2010 review of alcohol in the federal dietary guidelines, notes the difference in weight gain is modest. "Starting to drink is not a weight-loss diet," he said.

Rimm says after people drink alcohol, their heart rate increases, so they burn more calories in the subsequent hour. "It's a modest amount," he said. "But if you take an individual that eats 100 calories instead of a glass of wine, the person drinking the glass of wine will have a slight increase in the amount of calories burned."

Alcohol can influence a person's food choices. Research suggests women who drink alcohol consume fewer sweet foods. This may be because alcohol stimulates the same pleasure center in the brain as sweets.

A study published earlier this year found people consume more calories and fat on the days they drink alcohol. Researchers from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism studied 1,864 adults who answered a diet questionnaire on two days within a 10-day period. On one day, they drank alcohol, and on the second day, they did not. When they drank, they had an average of two to three alcoholic beverages at a time.

On days they did not drink, men consumed an average of 2,400 calories, while women consumed about 1,700 calories. When they drank, men consumed about 400 more daily calories, and women took in about 300 more calories.