

Men, Alcohol and Heart Disease

Drink to your health! But not too much.

According to a 12-year study by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) of 38,077 men, those who drank alcohol three or more days per week had a reduced risk of heart attack, compared with men who drank less frequently. Further, men who drank less than one alcoholic beverage each day had a similar risk reduction to those who drank three.

Many studies have reported that moderate drinking—two drinks a day—among men is associated with a reduced risk of heart disease. The current NHLBI study examined the relationship between quantity and frequency and found that the frequency of consumption was the key factor in lowered heart disease risk—not the amount or type of alcohol or whether it was consumed with a meal. Compared with men who drank less than once a week, men who consumed alcohol three or four days a week had approximately two-thirds, or 68 percent, the risk of heart attack, and men who drank alcohol five to seven days per week had a 63 percent risk.

It is important to note that the study suggested no additional cardiac benefit to drinking more than two drinks per day.

"There are well-proven ways to prevent cardiovascular disease and reduce its risks, including lowering cholesterol levels and blood pressure, maintaining a healthy weight, being physically active, and stopping smoking," said Claude Lenfant, M.D., director of the NHLBI.

"Therefore, we do not advise the public to begin drinking alcohol to prevent heart disease. However, those who already drink alcohol should be aware that current evidence suggests that moderate drinking may reduce the risk of heart disease in some individuals."

Source: National Institutes of Health, www.nih.gov



TLC for Diabetics' Feet

Your feet may be the last thing you consider when thinking about keeping yourself healthy. But if you are diabetic and do not take special, tender care of your feet, it could lead to amputation.

Diabetes is a condition that occurs when the body does not produce enough insulin to convert sugar into energy. Most people associate the disease with the need for a proper diet and for regulating glucose levels; however, diabetes affects the entire body and carries with it an infinite number of complications. One-in-five diabetics develop ulcers or sores on their feet that can result in the need for amputation.

"More than 70,000 people undergo an amputation of their lower extremities because of diabetes," said Mary Catherine Spires, M.D., clinical assistant professor, University of Michigan Health System Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. At least 50 percent of those amputations can be avoided if a diabetic is conscientious about preventive foot care, she added.

To prevent foot troubles, visually examine your feet daily. Dr. Spires said diabetics should take special note of any foot abnormalities, such as hammertoes, bunions and a flattened arch. When feet develop these abnormalities, there is an increased risk for calluses, which can lead to sores and infection.

Dr. Spires recommended that all diabetics be extremely protective of their feet and follow these tips to prevent foot injury:

- ✦ Always cut toenails straight across and gently file sharp corners with an emery board.
- ✦ Avoid extreme temperatures and keep your feet warm in cold weather.
- ✦ Wear comfortable, well-fitting shoes with closed heels and toes. Make sure your shoes are the correct size and are not tight.
- ✦ Do not go barefoot.
- ✦ Use lotion to keep skin moist and soft, but avoid putting lotion between toes where excess moisture could collect.
- ✦ Avoid tight-fitting socks and hose.
- ✦ Keep your feet clean. Feet should be washed daily and dried thoroughly, especially between the toes.
- ✦ Add exercise to your daily routine to improve blood flow to your legs and feet.
- ✦ Never use heating pads and hot water bottles on your feet. They have the potential to burn the skin.

Source: University of Michigan, www.med.umich.edu