

No Amount of Alcohol Safe for the Heart: WHF

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The widely held notion that consuming small to moderate amounts of alcohol is good for cardiovascular health is not supported by the data, the World Heart Federation (WHF) says in a [new policy brief](#).

In fact, the evidence is clear that any level of drinking can contribute to loss of a healthy life, the organization says.

"Over the past several decades, the prevalence of cardiovascular disease has nearly doubled, and alcohol has played a major role in the incidence of much of it," the WHF said in the brief.

"The portrayal of alcohol as necessary for a vibrant social life has diverted attention from the harms of [alcohol use](#), as have the frequent and widely publicized claims that moderate drinking, such as a glass of red wine a day, can offer protection against cardiovascular disease," Monika Arora, member of the WHF advocacy committee and coauthor of the brief, said in a news release.

"These claims are at best misinformed and at worst an attempt by the alcohol industry to mislead the public about the danger of their product," Arora added.

The WHF conclusions follow a recent report in the *Lancet* based on the Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD), which found that there is [no safe level](#) of alcohol consumption.

In 2019, nearly 2.4 million deaths were attributed to alcohol, accounting for 4.3% of all deaths globally and 12.6% of deaths in men 15 to 49 years of age.

Even small amounts of alcohol have been shown to raise the risk for cardiovascular disease, including coronary disease, [stroke](#), [heart failure](#), [hypertensive heart disease](#), cardiomyopathy, [atrial fibrillation](#), and aneurysm, the WHF notes.

Studies that claim otherwise are largely based on purely observational research, which fails to account for relevant cofactors, the organization writes.

Based on their summary of the evidence to date, there is no reliable correlation between moderate alcohol consumption and a lower risk for cardiovascular disease.

Alcohol use is also a "major avoidable risk factor" for cancer, digestive diseases, intentional and unintentional injuries, and several infectious diseases, the WHF says.

Alcohol use also has significant economic and social costs, which include costs to individuals and health systems, productivity losses, as well as the increased risk for violence, homelessness, and criminal activity.

The WHF policy brief calls for "urgent and decisive action" to tackle the unprecedented rise in alcohol-related death and disability worldwide.

Recommended actions include boosting restrictions on alcohol availability; advancing and enforcing drinking and driving countermeasures; increasing access to screening, brief interventions, and treatment for alcohol use disorder; enforcing bans on alcohol advertising; establishing a uniform minimum legal drinking age; and mandating health warnings on alcohol products.

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