

A Drink to Healthy Aging

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Researchers at the University of Newcastle say a glass of wine a day may be of benefit to the health of older women.

A study by the University's Priority Research Centre for Gender, Health and Ageing, in collaboration with the Hunter Medical Research Institute's (HMRI) Public Health Program, indicates that moderate consumption of alcohol in older women, in line with Australian alcohol guidelines*, is associated with better survival and quality of life.

Researchers conducted a national survey of 12,432 older women using data from the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health. The women, who were aged 70 to 75 years when the study began, provided information on alcohol consumption and their health over six years by completing questionnaires.

Results of the study, published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* in 2006, indicate that survival rates were lower in women who did not consume alcohol.

“The study was undertaken to determine whether women who drank alcohol according to Australian recommendations could continue doing so from age 70 years and beyond. Our data indicates that these guidelines can safely apply to these women at older ages. Indeed non drinkers and women who rarely drink had a significantly higher risk of dying than women who consumed a low intake of alcohol,” Centre Director, Professor Julie Byles, said.

“The health benefits that moderate alcohol consumption can provide are likely to be multiple. Alcohol use can be associated with psychological and social wellbeing which can be considered important health benefits in their own right. The social and pleasurable benefits of drinking, as well as the improved appetite and nutrition that may accompany modest alcohol intake, could also play a role.

“However, our study was not designed to provide evidence to suggest that non-drinkers should take up alcohol consumption in older age.”

Source: University of Newcastle

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