

Excessive alcohol consumption increases progression of atherosclerosis and the risk of stroke

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A Finnish population-based study showed that binge drinking was associated with increased atherosclerotic progression in an 11-year follow-up of middle-aged men. The progression of atherosclerosis was increased among men who consumed 6 drinks or more on one occasion. In addition, the risk of stroke increased among men who had at least one hangover per year. Hangovers increased the risk of stroke independent of the total amount of alcohol consumed. Hypertension and overweight, in the presence of alcohol consumption, further increased the risk of stroke. Drinking large quantities of alcohol more than twice a week increased the risk of stroke mortality in men.

Ms Sanna Rantakömi, MSc, presented the results in her doctoral thesis at the University of Eastern Finland.

The prospective follow-up study was part of the FinDrink Study. The subjects were a population-based sample of more than 2,600 men living in eastern Finland and participating in the Kuopio Ischaemic Heart Disease Risk Factor Study (KIHD). The follow-up time was between 11 to 20 years. Alcohol consumption was assessed using the Nordic alcohol consumption inventory. Incident strokes were ascertained through the FINMONICA stroke register, which is the Finnish part of the WHO MONICA (Multinational Monitoring of Trends and determinants in Cardiovascular Diseases), and from the Finnish national hospital discharge register and death certificate registers.

Excessive alcohol consumption has been associated with a wide range of medical conditions. Moderate alcohol consumption is linked to a lower risk of stroke than abstinence, whereas heavy alcohol consumption has been associated with an increased risk of stroke and [stroke](#)

[mortality](#). In addition to [alcohol consumption](#), the most important risk factors for [stroke](#) are hypertension, coronary artery disease, cardiac insufficiency, atrial fibrillation, type 2 diabetes, smoking, overweight, asymptomatic carotid artery stenosis and elevated levels of cholesterol.

More information: Rantakömi, S. et al. Alcohol consumption and the risk of stroke among hypertensive and overweight men, *Journal of Neurology*, 2013; 260:534-539.

Rantakömi, S. et al. Hangover and the risk of stroke in middle-aged men, *Acta neurol Scand*, 2013; 127:186-191. [DOI: 10.1111/j.1600-0404.2012.01696.x](#).

Rantakömi, S. et al. Binge drinking and the progression of atherosclerosis in middle-aged men: An 11-year follow-up, *Atherosclerosis* 2009; 205(1): 266-271.

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