

Alcohol and health problems

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A Finnish proverb says that alcohol is a drink for the wise. It means that alcohol must be consumed with caution in order to avoid its harms. Heavy drinking increases the risk of diseases and shortens your life.

Those who drink heavily need two or three times as many sick leaves as those who are sober or use alcohol wisely. The risk of dying is also two- or three-fold. Alcoholics can expect to live 6–18 years less than non-drinkers on average.

Wisdom in drinking means, first of all, that at least in certain situations – in traffic, at work, during an illness – total abstinence is a must. Alcohol consumption during pregnancy can lead to birth defects and impair your child's development, both before and after birth. Drinking to get drunk is particularly hazardous. Although it is not certain whether very small amounts of alcohol are harmful to the foetus, that danger cannot be ruled out completely. Put your baby's needs first.

Another wise decision is never to drink so much as to get drunk.

And third: the average daily consumption must remain moderate. According to what is now known, moderate consumption is about three glasses a day for men, and two for women. If consumption exceeds these limits, the risk of falling ill and dying increases in accordance with the amount of alcohol consumed.

Typical alcohol-related health problems include injuries, depression, phobias, nervous diseases, and diseases of the abdominal area. Intelligence, manual dexterity and muscular strength may show signs of deterioration. The use of alcohol also elevates your blood pressure and may lead to paralysis from a stroke. Moderate alcohol use reduces the risk of coronary disease, diabetes and age-related dementia.

Long-term use of alcohol increases the risk of incurable diseases, such as cerebral atrophy, hepatic cirrhosis, deterioration of the nervous system, pancreatitis, and cancer of the mouth, throat, larynx, oesophagus and stomach. A strong intoxication may lead to a fatal arrhythmia. Drinking will, in other words, not make you wise but ill.

Kari Poikolainen

National Institute for Health and welfare

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