

Type of Alcohol Consumed, Changes in Intake Over Time and Mortality: The Leisure World Cohort Study.

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ABSTRACT

Background: Modifiable behavioral risk factors including smoking and alcohol consumption are major contributing or actual causes of mortality. *Objective:* To examine the effect of alcohol intake on all-cause mortality in older adults. *Design & Setting:* Prospective population-based cohort study of residents of a California, USA, retirement community. *Subjects:* 8877 women and 5101 men (median age, 74 years) who in the early 1980s completed a postal health survey including details on alcohol consumption. *Methods:* Participants were followed for 23 years (1981-2004) including two follow-up questionnaires (in 1992 and 1998) asking about current alcohol intake. Separately for men and women, age-adjusted and multivariate-adjusted risk ratios of death and 95% confidence intervals were calculated using proportional hazard regression. *Results:* Of the 8567 women and 4942 men with complete information on the variables of interest and potential confounders, 6858 women and 4419 men had died (median age, 87 years). Both men and women who drank alcohol had decreased mortality compared with nondrinkers. Those who drank 2 or more drinks per day had a 15-19% reduced risk of death. The reduced risk was not limited to one type of alcohol. Stable drinkers (those who reported drinking both at baseline and follow-up) had a significantly reduced risk of death compared with stable nondrinkers. Those who started drinking at follow-up also had a significantly lower risk. Those who quit drinking were at increased risk of death, which was significant in women. *Conclusion:* In elderly men and women, moderate alcohol intake exhibits a beneficial effect of on mortality. Those who quit may do so for health reasons that affect mortality.