



## **Alcohol!**

Alcohol. Good or bad? Should I or shouldn't I? What alcohol is the best choice if I have chosen to drink? Many questions ... very few answers.

There is no such thing as good alcohol or bad alcohol. There are, however, many bad choices. Drinking alcohol in moderation, no matter your flavour, is always the best choice. I have found that when I have had too many drinks, I make too many bad choices such as leaving the bar and heading straight to the local pizza joint, or pita pit or Wendy's (my personal demon) where I would promptly engulf two or three burgers. The result of that bad choice? Over 2500 calories in one meal! Ouch!

Alcohol impacts the liver, kidneys and brain. As for its effect on the heart, it raises HDL (good cholesterol levels) - but exactly how/why it does what it does is still unclear. Are you at risk of a heart attack from high HDL levels such that you need a power assist from alcohol? If not, why take the risk of the other factors?

More particularly, alcohol is a drug; it's a depressant.

If it's a habit, such that it's become reflexive, that's this side of a potential addiction.

Alcohol influences blood vessels and fluid volume. This can result in a headache after excessive drinking. Tylenol should never be taken for a hangover headache, as it can interact with ethanol's by-products and damage the liver. Nausea is related to the toxic by-products of alcohol elimination and irritation to the stomach.

Alcohol can suppress anti-diuretic hormone (ADH) release. This means more urine. One standard drink can add 150 mL to urinary output. A few successive drinks can result in a trip to "dehydration-land" (and the restroom). This is why it is so important to drink water after every drink to help keep a balance. I try to drink one glass of water for every one serving of alcohol consumed. Remember, most coolers are the equivalent of two servings of alcohol.

If you are not using alcohol there is no reason to start. If you are using, then drinking small amounts of alcohol on a regular basis will likely offer the greatest health benefits without promoting fat gain. Any alcohol consumption above low to moderate levels can displace nutrients, increase health risks, and make you act like a degenerate at parties. Would you take a powerful antibiotic or heart medication without the advise of a physician? Probably not. Still, alcohol is available to virtually anyone who wants it, no prescription necessary. Remember that alcohol is a drug. Be smart!

**RUN!**

Benny