

Two Alcoholic Drinks a Day Are No Longer Safe, Says Australian Health Officials

Alcohol guidelines in Australia have been updated for the first time since 2009, and it's no longer considered safe to drink 2 standard alcoholic drinks a day. Telling adults how much alcohol to drink or not drink has the potential to blow up in your face, but the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC, the Australian equivalent of the U.S.'s National Institutes of Health) has ruled that reducing alcohol intake from 2 to 1.4 drinks a day can decrease instances of alcohol-related harm and improve quality of life. Anne Kelso, the chief executive of the NHMRC, observes...

We're providing advice about the health risks from drinking alcohol so that we can all make informed decisions in our daily lives – for ourselves and for our children," she said.

It's 10 years since our last review of the guidelines and we now know more about the effects of alcohol. We know that alcohol continues to have significant direct health consequences for many Australians."

Too High

A standard drink in Australia is 10 grams of alcohol (roughly .35 ounces). A bottle of wine contains 7 standard drinks, and under the previously recommended Australian guidelines, one could safely drink two bottles of wine a week. A Danish study from 2008 suggested that people drinking that much wine were less likely to die from cardiovascular disease than those who did not drink at all. The study also measured participants' levels of physical activity, cautioning that the

benefits of alcohol were best achieved with regular exercise.

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More recent research contradicts those findings, though. Britain lowered its recommended safe levels of alcohol in 2016 to the equivalent of seven glasses of wine a week. Two years later, a Cambridge University study found that more than five glasses of wine was dangerous. The 2018 study linked drinking 10 or more drinks a week to reduced life expectancy, a higher risk of stroke, heart failure, fatal aneurysms, and fatal hypertensive disease.

Can't Come Down

No one disagrees with the toxicity of alcohol in large quantities. But as a species, we like alcohol. We like the way it makes us feel. There is a long, storied history between humans and alcohol. But we also have trouble knowing when we've had too much. Is the Australian government babying their public? Or is reducing the recommended daily amount of alcoholic drinks from 2 to 1.4 enough to combat the negative effects of alcohol?

Sources:

- *Two Standard Alcoholic Drinks a Day No Longer Safe, Health Officials Say* – The Guardian
- *What is a Standard Drink* – Alcohol and Drug Foundation
- *Drinking more than five glasses of wine a week 'could knock years off life* – The Telegraph