

Should You Drink Wine?

Q. I have heard that red wine helps to raise the “good” cholesterol in our bodies. Should Christians begin drinking red wine for this reason? □—B.J., Vacaville, Calif.

A. It is a well-known fact that a small amount of beer, wine or alcohol will actually boost the high-density lipoprotein (HDL), which is commonly known as the “good” cholesterol. Numerous studies have shown this. A small amount of one of these three forms of alcohol can boost the HDL by an average of approximately 7 percent.

Studies have revealed that red wine actually is the best choice, since the antioxidants in the grapes, as well as in the wine itself, prevent low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol—or “bad” cholesterol—as they’re usually called—from being oxidized. Red wines also contain approximately 10 times more antioxidants than the other forms of alcohol.

This nutritional benefit found in red wine is based on the presence of an ingredient called resveratrol. Known as a “phytonutrient,” resveratrol is concentrated most in red wine.

Resveratrol can block the oxidation of LDL cholesterol. The oxidation of LDL cholesterol leads to formation of plaque in the arteries. Resveratrol also helps to prevent blood clots by

preventing platelets from clumping together.

The highest concentrations of resveratrol are found in the skins of the grapes. When red wine is made, the grapes are crushed and left to ferment with the skins—thus resveratrol is transferred to the wine. When white wine is made, however, the grape skins are discarded, leaving the wine to ferment without the benefit of high concentrations of resveratrol.

Even though a small amount of alcohol usually will raise the HDLs, I believe that drinking alcohol is not the best means of fighting heart disease. In my opinion, God has given us other alternatives.

Purple grape juice, for example, such as Welch's grape juice, also contains resveratrol, although it usually requires ingesting about three times as much grape juice as red wine to get equivalent amounts of the phytonutrient. You also can buy resveratrol in capsule form. Take approximately 1,000 mg (milligrams) once or twice a day. If you know you have low HDL cholesterol, you should consider supplementing with resveratrol.

If you prefer wine, you also can get resveratrol by drinking nonalcoholic red wines. I believe it is best to avoid drinking red wine with alcohol since this could lead to alcoholism.

Q.I've read that eating eggs can raise my cholesterol level. Is this true?—D.B., Cherokee, N.C.

A. Egg yolks do contain quite a bit of cholesterol, approximately 200 mg to 250 mg of cholesterol per yolk. However, the main cause of elevated blood cholesterol is a high intake of saturated fats, not high-cholesterol foods.

A Harvard-based study made public in 1999 found that eating one egg a day did not increase the risk of either heart disease or stroke. It was also discovered that eating eggs on a daily basis actually may benefit the levels of both triglycerides and HDL, which is the “good” cholesterol.

For diabetics who ate more than one egg a day, however, the risk of heart disease was found to be higher.

I believe that moderation is the key. I eat two eggs every other day. Egg yolks are high in choline, which is an essential co-factor that we need in our diets daily in order to make acetylcholine, which is one of the main neurotransmitters for the brain.

On a personal note, I eat an omelette made with two organic eggs, onion, cheddar cheese made with skim milk, and a very small amount of organic butter. It has been shown that onions contain compounds that hinder platelet clumping, which means that onions could help prevent blood clots. Onions also can raise HDL.

A word of caution—avoid margarine. I believe margarine is the most dangerous form of fat and, in my opinion, contributes to heart disease more than any other form of fat commonly found in the American diet. *

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