

Low rates of drinking may protect overweight women from developing diabetes while heavy drinking increases risk for all women

Emeryville, CA: Women who were overweight and abstained from lifetime drinking were three times more likely to develop diabetes compared with normal weight women who consumed seven or less alcohol drinks per week (low-volume), a new study from Senior Scientist and lead author, William C. Kerr and colleagues, found. No evidence of reduced risk was found for normal weight or obese women or for men. The study also found that women with a recent history of heavy occasion drinking once a week or more had a 55% increased risk of diabetes onset.

The U.S. study used longitudinal data to follow over 8200 participants for 33 years from 1979 to 2012 and controlled for demographics, smoking and Body Mass Index (BMI), the biggest contributor to diabetes development. In assessing the interaction of BMI group and risk for diabetes, the researchers used repeated measures of self-reported BMI over three decades, providing a more accurate assessment of current BMI than most previous studies.

“What we found supports results from previous studies that show regular low volume of drinking may have a protective effect for women’s diabetes risk while weekly heavy drinking days conferred greater risk,” said Kerr. “However, in our study, the protective effect was limited to overweight women only.”

With an aging population and a higher prevalence of adult-onset diabetes among older cohorts, Kerr and colleagues call for further research to determine alcohol’s role in chronic disease development, including assessment of drinking patterns among subpopulations to ensure preventative measures are effective.

Data used were from the US National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1979 cohort of 14 to 21 year olds, followed into their 50s.

References and More Information

Kerr, W.C., Williams, E., Li, L., Lui, C. K., Ye, Y., Greenfield, T.K., Lown, E.A. (2018). Alcohol use patterns and risk of diabetes onset in the 1979 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth Cohort. Preventative

Medicine: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0091743518300100>

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