

Moderate Drinking May Decrease Women's Risk of Developing Type 2 Diabetes

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Postmenopausal women's risk of developing type 2 diabetes, the form of the disease that typically develops later in life, may be reduced by moderate alcohol consumption, according to a new study from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"We found that moderate, daily alcohol consumption improved insulin and triglyceride concentrations," said one of the study's authors, Dr. David Baer, a research physiologist with the Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center in Maryland. "Thus, moderate, daily alcohol consumption would decrease risk of type 2 diabetes by improved insulin sensitivity [a measure of how the body responds to the hormone that helps cells use glucose for energy]. Alcohol is also likely to have similar effects in men."

Type 2 diabetes can develop when the body doesn't produce enough insulin or loses its sensitivity to insulin and produces more and more of the hormone in an attempt to maintain normal levels of sugar in the blood. The body becomes unable to properly use glucose for energy and eventually, blood-sugar levels rise above what is safe, causing damage to blood vessels and nerves.

The USDA study, which was published in the May 15 issue of the *Journal of American Medical Association*, aimed to find potential ways to prevent diabetes.

Previous research has shown that moderate alcohol consumption can have an effect on certain health problems, such as reducing the risk of heart disease or increasing hormones associated with a risk of breast cancer, Baer noted.