

Beer-Only Drinkers' Diets are Worse Than Wine Drinkers

As obesity, alcohol use and liver disease rise, physicians should note patient's lifestyle habits.

November 18, 2024 By American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases

Beer drinkers have lower-quality diets, are less active, and are more likely to smoke cigarettes than people who drink wine, liquor, or a combination, according to a study [presented] at [The Liver Meeting](#), held by the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases.

"Alcohol overuse is the leading cause of cirrhosis in the U.S., and metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD) is rapidly increasing," said Madeline Novack, chief resident at Tulane School of Medicine's internal medicine residency program and lead author of the study. "both types of liver disease often coexist, and lifestyle changes are key to managing and preventing these conditions, starting with understanding the link between alcohol use and poor nutrition."

Using a survey of a nationally representative sample of more than 1,900 U.S. adults who reported current alcohol use, researchers compared the diet quality among people who consume beer only (38.9%), wine only (21.8%), liquor only (18.2%) or a combination of alcohol types (21.0%), measuring self-reported eating habits against the Healthy Eating Index, a validated standardized tool based on dietary guidelines.

None of the alcohol-using groups came close to achieving the 80-point score that is considered an adequate diet on the 100-point Healthy Eating Index, Novack said, but the beer drinkers scored lowest at 49. Wine drinkers scored 55, and both liquor-only drinkers and combination drinkers scored nearly 53.

Beer-only drinkers, who were more likely to be male, younger, smokers, and low income, also reported the highest total daily caloric intake, adjusting for body weight, and the lowest level of physical activity. Previous studies have found that dietary quality declines with increasing alcohol consumption of any type, but little has been reported on the influence of specific alcoholic beverage type.

Novack said the differences in diet quality among drinkers could be attributed to the context in which food and alcohol consumed together. In the U.S., beer is often chosen in settings where the available foods tend to be low in fiber and high in carbohydrates and processed meats. On the

other hand, wine — particularly red wine — is often paired with meals complete with meat, vegetables and dairy.

Another possibility is the inverse, where dietary choices influence the choice of alcohol consumed, Novack said. For example, fried or salty foods create thirst that may also lead to beer-only consumption.

For prevention of liver disease and other health issues, physicians should ask about the type of alcohol consumed to guide discussion of healthy behaviors, Novack said. For example, findings of this study can be applied to patients who identify as beer-only drinkers and physicians could suggest increasing fruit and vegetable intake, as well as physical activity.

The study was simultaneously published in the journal *Nutrients*.

This [news release](#) was published by AASLD on November 17, 2024.

Click here for [more reports from The Liver Meeting 2024](#).