



## *Alcohol, Moderation and Health*

### **WHAT IS MODERATE DRINKING?**

The federal government's Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the government's official nutrition policy for the United States, defines moderate drinking as up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men.

### **WHY ARE THE GUIDELINES DIFFERENT DEPENDING ON WHETHER YOU ARE A MAN OR WOMAN?**

Most people think the difference is solely based upon body weight, but this is only one factor. Females also have less water in their bodies than males. Therefore, if a female and a male of the same size and weight drink the same amount of alcohol, the female will reach a higher concentration of alcohol in her blood.

### **WHAT COUNTS AS A DRINK?**

According to the Dietary Guidelines, a drink is defined as 1.5 fluid ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits (40% alcohol) such as rum, vodka, gin and whiskey; 12 fluid ounces of regular beer (5% alcohol); or 5 fluid ounces of wine (12% alcohol). One drink contains 0.6 fluid ounces of alcohol. For more on standard drinks visit [www.DrinkInModeration.org](http://www.DrinkInModeration.org).

### **WHICH CONTAINS MORE ALCOHOL PER STANDARD DRINK — BEER, WINE OR DISTILLED SPIRITS?**

When it comes to drinking alcohol, there is no beverage of moderation, only the practice of moderation. Each standard drink contains the same amount of alcohol, 0.6 fluid ounces of alcohol and has the same effect on the body. This scientific fact is a critical aspect of responsible drinking taught by the federal government and consumer groups such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving.



### **HOW MANY CALORIES ARE THERE IN A STANDARD DRINK OF DISTILLED SPIRITS, WINE AND BEER?**

- A standard drink of spirits (1.5 fl oz of 80-proof) is 96 calories
- A standard drink of regular beer (12 fl oz) is 144 calories
- A standard drink of red wine (5 fl oz) is 105 calories, white wine (5 fl oz) is 100 calories

### **ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS THE SAME FOR SPIRITS, BEER AND WINE?**

Yes. While there continues to be a widespread misperception that red wine is the only form of beverage alcohol that may confer potential health benefits, the scientific literature reports it is the ethanol (alcohol) in all types of beverage alcohol – distilled spirits, beer or wine – that, when consumed in moderation, is associated with a lower risk of cardiovascular disease, the leading cause of death in the United States.

It is not recommended that people begin drinking or drink more frequently for potential health benefits. Alcohol abuse can cause serious health and other problems. Even drinking in moderation may pose health risks for some people and some individuals should not drink at all.

### **WHO SHOULD NOT DRINK?**

According to the Dietary Guidelines, there are circumstances in which people should not drink beverage alcohol, including individuals who cannot restrict their drinking to moderate levels, anyone younger than the legal drinking age, women who are pregnant or who may be pregnant, individuals taking prescription or over the counter medications that can interact with alcohol, those with certain specific medical conditions or individuals who plan to drive, operate machinery, or take part in other activities that require attention, skill, or coordination or in situations where impaired judgment could cause injury or death.

### **WHAT'S THE BOTTOM LINE?**

Most adults who drink alcohol, do so in moderation and are at low risk for developing problems related to their drinking, according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. For those adults who choose to drink, they should do so in moderation and responsibly. If you have questions or concerns, you should discuss the potential risks and benefits of consuming alcohol with your healthcare provider.