SY23
ALCOHOL, CARDIOVASCULAR RISK AND MEDITERRANEAN DIET

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WINE, BEER OR SPIRIT DRINKING IN RELATION TO CARDIOVASCULAR EVENTS AND ALL-CAUSE MORTALITY
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Updated, large meta-analyses on the relationship between wine, beer or spirit consumption and cardiovascular outcomes including cardiovascular or all-cause mortality, have been performed in the past years. These meta-analyses provide consistent evidence of J-shaped relationships between either wine or beer intake and vascular risk or total mortality, with maximal protection (of about one fifth-one third), at moderate consumption (around 25 g/day of alcohol/day). A statistically significant association between spirits intake and vascular disease or mortality was not usually found. In other words, for drinkers having one to two drinks per drinking day, without episodic heavy drinking, there is substantial and consistent evidence from epidemiological studies of a beneficial association with fatal and non fatal cardiovascular risk and all-cause mortality when compared to lifetime abstainers. Such protection is not seen when drinking is more than moderate, defined as an average of 30 grams or more of alcohol per day or largely irregular (binge drinking).

Although polyphenols contained in wine or beer exert several beneficial effects on cardiovascular parameters in experimental models and in human volunteers, the epidemiological findings of a similar inverse association between the consumption of either beer or wine in relation to cardiovascular outcomes, do not permit the conclusion that the key effects on cardiovascular disease are primarily due to the polyphenols, but more likely to the alcohol in these beverages. The lack of a similar J-shaped association for spirits may be due to different drinking patterns (e.g., more binge drinking or worse socio-economic conditions among consumers of spirits), as these variables are less frequently included as confounders in the analyses.

Adjustment for other healthy lifestyle factors (e.g., no smoking, following a healthy diet, practicing regular physical exercise . . .) does not explain the lower cardiovascular risk or total mortality found to occur among moderate drinkers.