



Wine: The Fountain of Youth?

Nothing more excellent nor more valuable than wine was ever granted mankind by God.
–Plato

In 1991, CBS's 60 Minutes broadcast its now famous "French Paradox" story, which reported that the French, despite a diet high in saturated fats, enjoy a lower death rate from heart disease than citizens of other Western nations. That single report sent baby boomers into a frenzy, envisioning trips to Napa Valley to fill their wine cellars with this new fountain of youth. Finally, a fun way to live longer without all the hard work and exercise.

Three thousand scientific articles and more than 400 research projects later, we still don't definitively understand the importance of wine and alcohol to health or their role in life extension. Look online and you'll find over 180,000 websites with information on wine-related health studies. The general consensus is that wine taken in moderation does indeed benefit health. But just what is moderation, and what are the benefits?

Moderate drinking is defined as one drink a day for women and for men over 65, and two drinks a day for men under 65. This level of consumption has consistently been associated with lower levels of inflammation and lower risk for type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

According to a recent study, one drink a day can help the heart by relaxing the blood vessels, but more than that can actually increase heart rate. And all types of alcohol, including wine, have a blood-thinning effect that helps the circulatory system by making the blood platelets less sticky. But among the many varieties of alcoholic beverages, red wine stands out for its many additional health benefits, including its over 200 health-enhancing antioxidant compounds called polyphenols. White wine has similar antioxidants, but in concentrations so low that it would take 12 glasses of white wine to equal the benefits of one glass of red.



Health Benefits from Wine and Other Types of Alcohol

The antioxidant compounds in wine and other types of alcohol appear to have some amazing effects on the body—but remember, these positive effects come from moderate drinking and are outweighed by negative effects when too much alcohol is consumed.

Health Benefits Of Polyphenols

- Raise HDL (good cholesterol)
- Lower LDL (bad cholesterol)
- Anticoagulate (thin the blood)
- Vasodilator (open the blood vessels)
- Reduce oxidative stress
- Decrease blood pressure
- Reduce risk of ischemic stroke in men (one–two glasses red wine a day, three–four times a week)
- Reduce lipoproteins (fats) after eating, a possible explanation of the French Paradox

Health Benefits Of Resveratrol (Found In Concentration In Red Wine)

- Anti Carcinogen
- Inhibit the initiation and progression of cancer in a wide variety of tumor cells
- Anti-inflammatory
- Neuroprotective
- Antimicrobial
- Vasodilator (open the blood vessels)
- Stimulate life-extending enzymes

Red wine is thought to have unique life-extension potential because of a high concentration of one of a polyphenol called resveratrol—which appears to be a particularly potent, with an amazing range of health-enhancing antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and antimicrobial effects. It's been shown to suppress tumor cells; help repair DNA; contribute to metabolic balance; improve diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes; and even fight *H. pylori*, the bacteria implicated in stomach ulcers. It's also been shown to stimulate a gene in mice that increases their sensitivity to insulin and prevents diabetes.

In addition to these general health benefits, red wine has been receiving a lot of attention for its ability to extend the lifespan of worms, fruit flies, and short-lived fish. It appears that resveratrol activates sirtuins, substances that attack cancer cells while leaving healthy cells intact—the same substances, in fact, that are activated by calorie restriction.



Wine may even play a role in the prevention of Alzheimer's disease. In a recent study, researchers at the University of Bordeaux tracked nearly 4,000 local residents over age 65. They found that light drinkers—those who drank up to two glasses of wine a day—were 45 percent less likely to develop Alzheimer's than nondrinkers. A Dutch study showed similar results in protection against dementia. So light drinking may indeed be protective well beyond its anti-stroke effect!

In Vino Veritas? Some Wine FAQs

Which types of wine have the most benefits?

Resveratrol, one of the most potent health enhancers in wine, is found in varieties of red wine such as pinot noir, cabernet, and syrah. Because resveratrol is made by the grape as a natural defense against cool and damp climates, ultraviolet light and fungal infections, grapes grown in areas with those conditions should have the greatest concentration of resveratrol. Beneficial polyphenols are concentrated in the skins and seeds of grapes, making red wine, which is fermented with the skins, higher in beneficial substances than white wine.

Should I start drinking red wine?

If you're not currently drinking alcohol, I don't think the evidence is strong enough at this point to warrant starting. However, if you already drink alcohol, changing to red wine probably makes sense. Just be sure to limit your daily consumption to one drink if you're a woman or man over 65, and two drinks if you're a man under 65.

With so many different wine glass sizes available it is easy to get confused about how many servings you are drinking. A bottle of wine on average holds about five total servings, four five ounce glasses plus one four ounce glass.

If you prefer not to drink, you do have the option of taking resveratrol supplements. The dosage I suggest is 100 mg per day. And of course, some people shouldn't drink alcohol at all. Remember, alcohol is an extremely dangerous substance when abused, and overconsumption can diminish your health and actually increase your rate of cellular aging.



Ready to Open That Bottle? Don't Forget to Count Calories!

The alcohol content of wine varies widely, but is usually between 10 and 14 percent. Obviously, the higher the alcohol content, the higher the calories. A bottle of wine contains 750 milliliters of liquid, or 25.42 ounces—about five 5-ounce or six 4-ounce servings. So at twenty calories per ounce, a full bottle has approximately 525 calories.

Will drinking wine or taking resveratrol supplements help me live longer?

Maybe. But until we learn the full effect, I recommend that you include wine in your Ultrahealth™ program only if you're already consuming alcohol. And remember, you need to account for the fact that a five-ounce glass of red wine has about 106 calories and a glass of white about 100 calories.

Various Five-Ounce servings of red wine. Be careful with serving size! Remember, drinking a moderate amount of wine is key—just one five-ounce glass per day for women and men over 65, and two five-ounce glasses per day for men under 65.

Contraindications for Alcohol Consumption: Who Shouldn't Drink Alcohol

If you do choose to drink alcoholic beverages, don't exceed one drink per day for women and men over 65 and two drinks per day for men under 65. And if you fall into one of the following categories, please don't drink alcohol at all:

- Children and adolescents
- People of any age who can't restrict their drinking to moderate levels
- Women who may become pregnant or who are pregnant
- People who plan to drive, operate machinery, or take part in other activities that require attention, skill, or coordination
- People taking prescription or over-the-counter medications that can interact with alcohol
- People with specific medical conditions
- People recovering from alcoholism