



Minimal Alcohol Consumption Reduces the Risk of Graves' Disease

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ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY ● ● ● ● ●

Even a small alcohol intake may have some preventive effect on the mechanisms that produce Graves' disease. This conclusion appears to apply independently of cofactors such as age, sex, and smoking. The present extensive study strongly supports earlier work, so that one can now add Graves' disease to the list of autoimmune diseases—such as lupus erythematosus, rheumatoid arthritis, and autoimmune diabetes—known to be prevented by the effect of alcohol. The odds ratio between abstainers and minimal alcohol consumers for Graves' disease

developing was 1.7. This rather convincing difference remained stable regardless of whether the data of current or earlier alcohol consumption was taken into account. Several mechanisms for the protective effect of alcohol are proposed, such as loss of natural killer cell activity and alterations in both T helper cell 1 (Th1)- and Th2-mediated immunity. In many studies, mostly done in animals, the impact of large quantities of alcohol on the immune system were tested. These results may not be relevant to the present observation. Alcohol consumers will not be bothered about the lack of explanation but will probably appreciate the message.