

Study: Alcohol consumption leads to bad food choices

By Sumathi Reddy, Wall Street Journal

It isn't just the beer that contributes to beer bellies. It could also be the extra calories, fat and unhealthy eating choices that may come with moderate drinking.

A recent study found that men consume an additional 433 calories (equivalent to a McDonald's double cheeseburger) on days they drink a moderate amount of alcohol. About 61% of the caloric increase comes from the alcohol itself. Men also report eating higher amounts of saturated fats and meat, and less fruit and milk, on those days than on days when they aren't drinking, the study showed.

Women fared a bit better, taking in an extra 300 calories on moderate-drinking days, from the alcohol and eating fattier foods. But women's increase in calories from additional eating wasn't statistically significant, the study said.

"Men and women ate less healthily on days they drank alcohol," said Rosalind Breslow, an epidemiologist with the federal National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism and lead author of the study. "Poorer food choices on drinking days have public-health implications," she said.

The findings dovetail with controlled lab studies in which participants generally eat more food after consuming alcohol. Researchers suggest that alcohol may enhance "the short-term rewarding effects" of consuming food, according to a 2010 report in the journal *Physiology & Behavior* that reviewed previous studies on alcohol, appetite and obesity.

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