



WINE LINKED TO LOWERING THE RISK OF OSTEOPOROSIS

Research that links drinking wine lower risks of osteoporosis in post-menopausal women has been noted by an international forum.

Words by Lynn Elsey

A team of reviewers from the International Scientific Forum on Alcohol Research has backed a new study that found that drinking a couple of glasses of wine a day could be as effective as taking biophosphonates to help maintain bone strength and fight osteoporosis.

The reviewers based their findings on a study undertaken by researchers at the University of Oregon, US. The results, which were published in the September issue of *Menopause*, showed that a moderate intake of alcohol – one to two small glasses of wine, averaging 19 grams per day – lowered the risk of decreased bone density.

Bone weakness or osteoporosis is a major concern for fractures in post-menopausal women. According to the authors of the study, the weakness is the result of an imbalance between normal resorption, a process of old bone dissolving, and the laying down of new bone – which is known as 'bone turnover'. After menopause, the resorption of old bone continues but the addition of new bone is less successful, leading to a decrease in bone density.

The Oregon study investigated the effect of moderate drinking on 40 healthy post-menopausal women and involved measurements during consumption, during a non-drinking phase and when the participants resumed drinking. The participants drank an average of 19 grams of wine per day, approximately 1 to 1.5 drinks per day (US).

The results showed that consuming wine led to a reduction in bone turnover and therefore stronger bones. It also found that abstaining from alcohol resulted in increased bone

among regular moderate drinkers.

The researchers said that the most important aspect of the study may be that it has helped identify cellular mechanisms for the increase in bone



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turnover, creating a higher risk of developing osteoporosis. A resumption of drinking had an immediate effect of reducing the negative effects however.

According to the forum reviewers, the results suggested that moderate alcohol consumption provides a similar effect to taking medicines commonly used to treat bone diseases, called biophosphonates.

"The issue of moderate alcohol ingestion being positively correlated with bone mineral density in older adults, especially postmenopausal women, is now of little doubt", Jonathan Powell and Ravin Jugdaohsingh, from the MRC Human Nutrition Research Group at Cambridge University, subsequently noted in a response to the initial posting of the forum's paper.

The results support previous research that has shown greater bone mineral density and lower risk of fractures

density found in moderate drinking post-menopausal women.

The International Scientific Forum on Alcohol Research is a joint program between the Institute on Lifestyle and Health at Boston University School of Medicine (US) and Alcohol in Moderation (UK). The forum is designed to provide critiques, comments and expert opinion on research published on scientific publications and policy statements related to alcohol and health and to provide a source of expert opinion. 

