

# Does Alcohol Consumption Worsen Nonalcoholic Steatohepatitis?

*In a rat study, moderate alcohol intake had deleterious effects on NASH.*

Some patients with nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) also have other conditions (e.g., diabetes, hyperlipidemia) for which moderate drinking has been reported to impart benefits. The effects of moderate drinking on NASH in humans, which has a widely variable prognosis, are unknown. To begin to understand these effects, investigators fed a high-fat diet (71% of energy from fat) to 20 rats until NASH was induced. The rats were then switched to a modified high-fat diet (55% of energy from fat); in 10 rats, that diet was altered to provide 16% of calories from alcohol, largely by replacing dextrin maltose in the modified diet with alcohol.

After 4 weeks, the ratio of liver weight to body weight was significantly higher in the alcohol-fed rats. The alcohol-fed group also had more hepatic inflammatory foci and apoptotic hepatocytes than did the control group.

**Comment:** Alcohol had a deleterious effect on NASH. Although the authors describe the amount of alcohol given to the rats as just over the amounts considered to be moderate for people, the rats received the equivalent of about three drinks daily, which is considered excessive by guidelines. Nonetheless, the findings do raise the concern that alcohol could be harmful for people with NASH.

— [Richard Saitz, MD, MPH, FACP, FASAM](#)

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