



# **Blood Pressure and Alcohol**

Alcohol can be toxic if abused and can put your health in danger. One of the adverse effects of alcohol abuse is that it causes hypertension (high blood pressure). In order to avoid such dangers, you need to stick to sensible drinking limits. However if you feel that you cannot stick to drinking sensible limits, the best thing would be to stop drinking alcohol altogether. Otherwise you could be ushering in ill-health and early death in your life.

## **Hypertension Explained**

What alcohol does is that it creates a force in the flow of your blood as it passes through the arteries. To make that clear, it is similar to water at a certain flowing through a hose that is connected to a tap. Now the water pressure will depend on how fully the tap is opened. Similarly, your heart is the pump that pushes the blood to the rest parts of the body, and this is very vital for your survival.

When in good health, your heart normally pumps the blood at moderate pressure, and this keeps arteries in tiptop condition. However, the blood pressure inside the arteries can be too high such that as the blood flow around the body it goes causing damages to different parts of the body. While your body can manage high levels of blood pressure, it becomes damaging if the condition persists for long.

## **The Effects Of Alcohol to Blood Pressure**



Once you consume alcohol, it does not go through digestion in your digestive system. That means that it is rapidly absorbed from your gastrointestinal tract (GI tract), travels via the bloodstream, and is taken up by various body tissues. Short-term effects occur when you drink several alcohol drinks in one sitting. Long-term effects, on the other hand, are chronic, and they occur when you drink the alcohol regularly in large amounts. The kind of effect that alcohol has on your blood pressure is determined by whether you consume it occasionally or chronically, and the amount you consume per one sitting. Here are three different types of effects:

### **Small Amount Lowers Blood Pressure**

Small doses of alcohol have a healthy effect on the blood pressure. It has been proven that taking small doses of alcohol is able to lower your blood pressure by between 2 and 4 mm Hg. Small doses here is when a woman takes up to one alcohol drink a day, and men consume up to two drinks a day. With that said, it is not advisable to start drink alcohol—if at all you don't drink already— just because of its positive effect on the blood pressure.

### **Short-term Effects of Taking Large Amount of Alcohol**

Taking alcohol in large doses has the reverse effect of taking this drink in small doses. A person is said to have taken alcohol in excess if a woman takes more than one drink in a day and man takes more than two drinks in a day. Taking excess alcohol raises your blood pressure.

Now, a large amount of alcohol raises your blood pressure if you took a lot of it in one sitting. In such a case, the spike in blood pressure will happen immediately, but the effect is temporary. If you are on medication to lower the blood pressure, taking alcohol can interfere with drugs and make them less effective, which means the blood pressure of the patient will rise even more.

## Long-term Effects of Taking Large Amount of Alcohol Large Amounts

Your blood pressure may return to normal after a heavy night of drinking. Now, this happens if you take alcohol sporadically. If, on the other hand, you are a heavy drinker and have been drinking alcohol over a long time, you are likely to get a chronic blood pressure. Besides developing chronic hypertension, alcohol can increase your risk of suffering a stroke in addition to getting blood vessel disease such as atherosclerosis.

## Stopping Suddenly After Long-term Use



While stopping taking alcohol could be the solution to your high blood pressure, a regular drinker of excessive amounts of alcohol should not stop drinking it suddenly. This is because, doing so can cause a further dangerous spike in blood pressure. In order to avoid the blood pressure increase, it is advisable that you taper off slowly. If you are planning to stop drinking alcohol suddenly, then be sure to consult your doctor for advice. Stopping drinking alcohol under the care of a doctor can really drop your blood pressure.

## Dangers of Hypertension

High blood pressure has serious implications to your health. Normally, the effects of hypertension occur gradually over time without the victim noticing any problem. Some of the dangers associated with high blood pressure are:

- If the pressure of the blood flowing through arteries is too high, then you are at risk of having the cells in the lining of your arteries damaged. Damaged lining of the arteries develops a thick coating that creates a favorable environment for fat accumulation. This can lead to blockages and eventually death.
- Hypertension weakens the walls of arteries leading to an aneurysm.
- It leads to arrhythmia, coronary artery disease, and heart attacks.
- High blood pressure leads to a stroke.
- Hypertension can lead to dementia as the brain is not getting enough blood.
- Hypertension can also cause eye problems.

If you are a heavy drinker and would want to stop taking alcohol, see a doctor to advise you on how to stop alcohol drinking safely. If you have never taken even a sip, don't start drinking it just because of its positive effects on blood pressure, especially when taken in small amounts.

