

**Beer and nutrition. Now, those are two words that we don't usually see together.
Can beer be part of a healthy diet?**

Sure. Like all alcohol, moderate beer consumption has many health benefits – including a lowered risk of cardiovascular disease. Believe it or not, some cardiologists will even go as far as recommending a beer a day to some of their patients.

Some key studies on beer have found that:

- The folate found in beer lowers homocysteine levels. Now, lower homocysteine levels translate to a lower risk of cardiovascular disease.
- Lab studies have found constituents in beer that lower Triglycerides and LDL (bad) Cholesterol, as well as reduce blood clotting due to its blood thinning effect.
- Other studies have found that women who consume one beer each day have improved mental health
- And, another interesting relationship is beer and bone density. Like milk, beer may give you strong bones – the reason is its high concentration of silicone. Silicone allows the deposit of calcium and other minerals into bone tissue, therefore increasing bone density.

Now, like red wine, the benefits of beer nutrition really have nothing to do with the alcohol. In fact, the low-alcohol beers and non-alcohol beers offer the same heart-protective effect as regular and light beers.

If it's not the alcohol that gives beer its health properties, should we be choosing a light beer over a regular beer?

Light Beers

- Light beers are certainly going to be the healthier choice.
- Light refers to a beer's alcohol content, not its colour.
- A 'light beer' is one that has less than 3.5% alcohol - compared to the average 5% alcohol.
- Because of the lower alcohol content, light beers are also going to be lower in calories: 100 calories on average – compared to 150 calories for a regular beer

Low-Carb Beers

- Low-Carbohydrate beers would also be considered a 'light beer'
- The average carbohydrate content of beer is 13 g. Low-carb beers can have as little as 1g of carbohydrates per bottle.
- These low carb beers will also be low in calories.
- Example: MGD 64, for example, has just 64 calories and 2.4 g carbs per 12-oz

What about the other types of beer, lagers, ales, stouts, and specialty beers?

Lager and ales are the most popular choice of beer drinkers. They'd be considered the average beer, and the ones used in most beer studies.

Stouts

There is one beer that I'd like to mention for its unique health-promoting properties and that's *Guinness*.

Guinness is lower in alcohol, calories and carbohydrates than most other beers, aside from light beers.

A study done last fall at the University of Wisconsin found that Guinness worked like aspirin to prevent clots that increased the risk of heart attacks.

Guinness is loaded with flavonoids, the antioxidants responsible for keeping bad LDL cholesterol from clogging arteries.

In addition, Guinness has a higher concentration of B vitamins, which lowers levels of homocysteine, and is linked to cardiovascular health.

Researchers also found that antioxidants from the moderate use of stouts (such as Guinness) reduce the incidence of cataracts by 50%.

Specialty Beers

- Microbreweries have some excellent quality beers.
- Vitamin-enriched beer
- Rice beers suitable for persons with wheat allergies.

So, how much is too much?

Like other recommendations for alcohol, *one beer per day* may improve your health.

However, in light of recent research that suggests that perhaps 1 drink a day is too much, it really is best to talk to your doctor about the right amount of alcohol for you and your health.

If I'm going to choose a beer to drink on St Patrick's day, which would you recommend?

Well, if you're going to be having more than one, definitely choose a light beer: a lower-calorie, lower-alcohol beer such as MG 64, Coors Light, or Corona Light.

And, for the occasional drink, I'd suggest reaching for a Guinness!