

Alcohol and Fitness

Is there any place for alcohol in the fitness lifestyle? The answer is ambiguous. Studies show that there are definite health benefits to moderate alcohol intake, however, if weight loss is one of the goals of your fitness journey, you'll need to think carefully on how much alcohol you want to ingest. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Alcohol contains 7 calories per gram and offers NO nutritional value. It only adds empty calories to your diet. If you can afford the calories for the occasional drink, then enjoy, but if you are restricting calories, it may be best to invest your calories in something more nutritionally dense.
- Alcohol is metabolized differently than proteins, carbohydrates and fats. When no other food is present, alcohol is absorbed immediately from the stomach. With the presence of other food, the process is slowed down. However, once food and alcohol get to the small intestine, alcohol is processed first. Carbohydrates and fats are dealt with secondly and if there is no immediate need for this energy, it is stored more readily as fat.
- Alcohol stimulates appetite and lowers your inhibitions. This may be detrimental to your diet plans and good intentions. Your will power may be reduced and you may make poor dietary choices or overeat after ingesting alcohol. To avoid this, it may be best to have a drink after you've eaten.
- Alcohol is a diuretic. This means that it causes water loss and potential dehydration. With this water loss, there is an accompaniment of mineral loss. Minerals such as potassium, calcium, zinc and magnesium are vital to important bodily functions. To avoid dehydration and mineral loss, it's best to have a full glass of water following every alcoholic beverage.
- Some people will choose hard liquor over beer and wine in an effort to reduce overall calories. If this is your strategy, be mindful of the mix that you use in your drink. Hard liquor has marginally less calories than beer and wine, but when mixed with sugar pop or juice, those calories begin to add up. Choose water, club soda or possibly diet pop as a mix if calories are an issue for you.

As with anything in life, moderation is the key. You need to decide how to 'spend' your daily calories and if this includes an alcoholic beverage, then enjoy! (Responsibly!)

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Shawna is shaking up the fitness routines of several people in her Adventure Boot Camps. For more information, please visit her website.