

## ALCOHOL

### Drinking in moderation could reduce Alzheimer's risk



People over 60 who consume moderate amounts of alcohol have a reduced risk for Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, according to a large review of studies. The analysis, which appeared in the July issue of *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, reviewed 15 studies that together followed more than 28,000 subjects for at least two years. The studies variously defined light to moderate drinking as one to 28 drinks per week. Compared with abstainers, male drinkers reduced their risk for dementia by 45 percent, and women by 27 percent. The researchers acknowledge that studying the effects of alcohol on dementia is complicated by issues like beverage type, standards of quantity and individual behavior that may interact with alcohol to affect mental acuity. But there is ample evidence from other studies that moderate alcohol consumption can increase HDL, or "good cholesterol," improve blood flow to the brain and decrease blood coagulation. All three factors may reduce the risk for dementia. Still, the authors warn against drawing conclusions. "The overall safety of alcohol use in later life," they write, "needs to be evaluated." NICHOLAS BAKALAR