

## **To Drink or Not to Drink**

By Dr. George Khoury

For many years numbers of studies have been conducted to find if there is any association of alcohol intake with a reduced risk of heart disease. All these studies showed that moderate intake of alcohol reduced the risk of heart disease and increase the ratio of good cholesterol (HDL) to bad cholesterol (LDL). These observations have explained the so-called **French paradox**: the lower rate of heart disease in France than in neighboring countries and in the USA, despite the relatively high intake of fat and cheese in France. Several studies attribute the French paradox to the relatively high consumption of red wine by French.

### **Can everyone drink?**

NO. Not everybody can drink. For those with liver disease, hepatitis C & B, a history of alcoholism, or those taking certain medications, even a small amount of alcohol can have a bad effect on their liver. These individuals should not drink alcohol at all, because their risk of other problems caused by alcohol consumption is greater than their possible reduced risk of heart disease by drinking small amounts of alcohol. If you are taking any medications, be sure to check with your health care provider to determine if you might have an increased risk of liver damage with alcohol consumption before having a drink.

### **Is only red wine a good alcohol?**

No. Actually any kind of alcohol has a good effect on the heart, provided that the alcohol is taken in moderate amounts – no more than one to two drinks daily for men and one drink daily for women. One “drink” of alcohol consists of one glass of wine, one bottle of beer, or one shot of whiskey or other distilled alcohol. Health benefits may be achieved with as few as three drinks per week.

### **If I do not like to drink should I start to drink?**

No. There are a lot of people do not want or like to drink and they certainly do not have to start. Moderate alcohol use is merely one tool people have to reduce their risk of heart disease. Good nutrition – “eating healthy” – and regular exercise are also important tools, not only in reducing the risk of heart disease, but in maintaining general good health.