

PRESS RELEASE

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A little wine is good for you? Not if you are overweight

The common assumption that a couple of glasses of wine are a boost to your heart's health may be wrong if you are overweight or obese, say researchers from Curtin University's Public Health Advocacy Institute.

Writing in this month's issue of the *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, researchers Tim Lobstein and Mike Daube acknowledge that previous studies have shown a 'J-shaped' curve, indicating that a little alcohol might lower your risk of heart disease while a lot will certainly raise the risk. But they were concerned that the original data came from surveys undertaken over forty years ago, among populations who were much slimmer than they are now.

'We were concerned that the findings from a previous generation may not apply to our modern, fatter population,' said lead author Dr Tim Lobstein. 'So we revisited the data in the classic Framingham Heart Study, and examined the differences between slimmer and fatter men to see how the J-shaped curve held up. It held pretty well for slim men, but not for those with a higher Body Mass Index, above 27.5 kg/m².'

'In effect, the standard advice about a small amount of alcohol being good for the heart doesn't stack up for overweight men,' he said. 'We will need to check other surveys and see if they show the same pattern, and we will need to check the data for women.'

'We know that apart from heart disease, other causes of disease are made worse by even small amounts of alcohol, including cancer, diabetes and stroke – the major chronic disease killers,' he added. 'For now, the advice has to be that there is no such thing as a beneficial level of consumption, especially if you are overweight.'

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Notes:

1. The letter, titled "Alcohol: No cardio-protective benefit for overweight adults?" is published today in the *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* (2012), vol. 36 no. 6, page 582. A pre-publication proof is available here: http://www.iaso.org/site_media/uploads/ANZJPH_2012-6_-_p582_Lobstein_Letter.pdf
2. Dr Tim Lobstein is an adjunct professor with Curtin University. He is Director of Policy at the International Association for the Study of Obesity, London, UK. Contact: tlobstein@iaso.org
3. Professor Mike Daube is Professor of Health Policy at Curtin University where he is Director of PHAIWA and the McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth.
4. The Framingham Heart Study is a longitudinal survey of some 5000 middle-aged men monitored for more than 40 years, in Framingham, Massachusetts, USA. It is designed to assess the link between the men's lifestyle patterns and their subsequent ill-health and cause of death. Details are at <http://www.framinghamheartstudy.org/about/index.html>