

Beer is Healthy

Beer has naturally been a favoured drink throughout time. Safer than water for centuries (beer has been boiled, eliminating any harmful bacteria), beer was a wonderful nutritional supplement to families everywhere. Only now are we learning about the health benefits of moderate consumption of Canada's #1 alcoholic beverage.

Let's start with the biggest myth in beerdom. Some folks believe that drinking beer leads to a 'Beer Belly' and that beer itself is fattening. This is of course, utter nonsense. There is no fat in beer and in fact a glass of beer has fewer calories than an equivalent size glass of milk or apple juice.

You may ask yourself, "How is it that so many beer drinkers are overweight"? Much of our weight gain comes not from the beer itself but is due to the types of foods we tend to enjoy when we are having a beer. You can't possibly believe that pizza, fries, wings, chips etc. are low in calories. Think also about the time of day that we consume beer and food. Much of it is in the evening when our bodies are least efficient in metabolizing food and drink.

Another reason for weight gain comes from Dr. David Williams at the University of Wales. He believes that beer acts as an appetite stimulant but the alcohol in beer confuses the stomach, making it very difficult for the stomach to realize when it is full.

Beer is an alcoholic beverage using cereal grains (based on a 341ml, 5%ABV beer)

- 135 - 150 calories (per 12 ounces at 5% ABV)
- no fat, no cholesterol, caffeine free, no nitrates
- 1 gm of protein and 13 gms of carbohydrates
- lots of B vitamins and anti-oxidants (darker beers) [B3, B2(bioflavin) and B6]
- significant amounts of calcium, magnesium, potassium, phosphorus and vitamins such as folic acid and niacin
- very small amounts of sodium
- 92% of beer is water



The University of Western Ontario in 2004 published a study showing the benefits of beer. Dr. John Trevithick found that beer has antioxidant properties stemming from the existence of polyphenols. Antioxidants help prevent the onset of many aging diseases such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease and cataracts.

A glass of beer aids in lubricating the blood and increasing circulation and therefore decreases the risk of blood clotting according to Dr. W. Gifford-Jones. According to Dr. Jones, beer helps to increase the levels of high density lipoproteins (good cholesterol) which clears arteries of bad cholesterol. The alcohol content of beer also lowers the level of fibrinogen (a small particle in blood involved in clotting). The lower level of fibrinogen equals lower chances of blood clots.

A study conducted by Dr. Guiseppe Zuccala of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Rome (according to All About Beer Magazine) showed that moderate use of alcohol was associated with a 40% lower risk of mental impairment. Other studies have shown that alcohol may release acetylcholine in the hippocampus, an area of the brain that facilitates learning and memory.

Beer with all of its complexity and diversity make it a great drink to enjoy with friends. Now you can drink it in moderation knowing that is also a healthy choice.

Remember to enjoy responsibly!

