



The Dangers of Drinking With Hepatitis C and Cirrhosis

Even light to moderate alcohol consumption is associated with developing liver cancer.

September 6, 2016

Consuming alcohol and not being cured of hepatitis C virus (HCV) is associated with a greater likelihood of developing liver cancer among those with HCV and compensated cirrhosis. Physicians generally discourage any drinking among individuals with hep C because of alcohol's negative effects on the liver.

Publishing their findings in the *Journal of Hepatology*, researchers conducted a prospective study of 192 people with HCV-related compensated cirrhosis, the less advanced stage of cirrhosis (decompensated cirrhosis is the more advanced stage).

The participants were followed for a median 58 months. During that time, 74 of them consumed alcohol, with a median intake of 15 grams per day, or about one and a half drinks. Sixty-eight individuals achieved a sustained virologic response 12 weeks after completing hep C therapy (SVR12, considered a cure). Thirty-three people in the overall group developed hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC, the most common form of liver cancer), 53 developed decompensated cirrhosis and 39 died.

The five-year cumulative rate of liver cancer was 10.6 percent among those who did not drink and 23.8 percent among those who did. The respective liver cancer rate among those who were cured of hep C and those who were not was 2 percent and 21.7 percent. Among those who were cured of hep C, none of those who did not drink and 6.2 percent of those who drank developed liver cancer. Among those who were not cured of the virus, 15.9 percent of those who did not drink and 29.2 percent who drank developed liver cancer.

After adjusting the data for various factors, the researchers found that not being cured of hep C combined with drinking alcohol was associated with a 3.43-fold increased risk of liver cancer.

Alcohol was not associated with developing decompensated cirrhosis or death.

To read the study abstract, [click here](#).

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