

New Study Links Alcohol And Soda To Increased Hair Loss Risk

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- *New research looking at more than 61,000 mostly female subjects found a link between hair loss and certain dietary habits, including alcohol consumption.*
- *Experts theorize that alcoholic beverages may block the absorption of key vitamins and minerals that are essential to hair growth.*
- *Dermatologists offer their best tips on what to do if you're noticing more strands on your brush or in the shower drain.*

If you're beginning to experience [hair loss](#), it's understandable to want answers. And while the exact [cause of your shedding](#) can be tricky to pin down, new research suggests that how much—and what—you drink may play a role.

A new scientific analysis published in [Nutrition and Health](#) took a deep dive into existing studies on nutrition and hair loss, and uncovered an interesting correlation between thinning and alcohol consumption. Again, the issue is complex, but if you're noticing more strands in your hairbrush or shower drain and haven't been able to pinpoint a cause, it may be worth taking a second look at your drinking habits.

Meet the experts: [Gary Goldenberg](#), MD, is assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital. Keri Gans, RDN, is author of [The Small Change Diet](#). [Ife J. Rodney](#), MD, is founding director of Eternal Dermatology + Aesthetics. [Joshua Zeichner](#), MD, is director of cosmetic and clinical research at Mount Sinai Hospital.

Here, experts dissect the findings and offer sound solutions—and context—that may save your strands.

What did the research uncover?

For the study, researchers analyzed data on diet and hair loss from 17 studies that involved more than 61,000 mostly female participants. The scientists found several interesting things related to nutrition and what's sprouting from your scalp, such as a link between higher levels of vitamin D and iron and a lower risk of [developing alopecia](#), the medical term for hair loss.

They also found that consuming higher amounts of sugary drinks and alcohol were linked to more shedding—not the first time in recent memory that the possible health effects of alcohol have been [called into question](#). “The findings suggest a correlation between alcohol consumption and an increased incidence of hair loss, as well as a potential inhibitory effect on hair growth,” the researchers wrote. They also noted in the conclusion: “Limiting alcohol and soft drinks may be beneficial.”

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Why might alcohol impact hair loss?

It's not entirely clear, and this review didn't assert a definitive connection. But there are some theories on what could be behind the link. "Heavy alcohol consumption can contribute to poor absorption of vitamins and nutrients," says [Gary Goldenberg](#), MD, assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital. Meaning, when you consistently go too hard at happy hour, it can keep vitamins and nutrients that support your hair health from doing their job.

Other experts offer a different take: "Alcohol doesn't directly cause hair loss, but it may contribute to it," says Keri Gans, RDN, is author of [The Small Change Diet](#). "Drinking may also increase inflammation, disturb sleep, and stress the liver, all of which can affect hair growth. Essentially, it's less about alcohol itself and more about the ripple effects it has on overall health."

So, it's unlikely that the [odd glass of wine](#) is going to majorly mess with your follicles, says [Ife J. Rodney](#), MD, founding director of Eternal Dermatology + Aesthetics. "Social alcohol use is unlikely to lead to hair

loss, but extreme amounts that may affect your ability to engage in a healthy, balanced diet, can increase the risk of a variety of health issues, including hair loss,” she says.

What else can cause hair loss?

A lot, actually. “Diet plays an important role,” Dr. Goldenberg says. “This is particularly true in female patients, who may have a higher risk of iron deficiency, vitamin D deficiency, and hormonal abnormalities.” On the plus side, there’s some evidence that [eating more protein](#) can help hair to grow. Genetics may also play a role, he says. Even tight hairstyles can raise the risk of developing a certain type of hair loss known as [traction alopecia](#), according to the [American Academy of Dermatology](#).

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What to do if you're dealing with hair loss.

If you're dealing with hair loss and it's not getting better, Dr. Goldenberg says it's time to see a dermatologist for an evaluation. He or she will likely perform blood work to see if you're deficient in any important nutrients and recommend a tailored treatment plan from there.

It's also important not to *assume* that alcohol is responsible for your hair loss. "I've personally seen patients who never drink and *still* suffer from hair loss," says [Joshua Zeichner](#), MD, director of cosmetic and clinical research at Mount Sinai Hospital. "So while alcohol intake may be correlated with hair loss in some people, I would not tell people that stopping drinking will benefit their hair."

Whatever the cause of your shedding, there are several [at-home solutions](#) (best when used in conjunct) that can help, including [red light tools](#) that trigger hair growth, topicals like minoxidil, and certain [vitamins and supplements](#), which may make up for nutrient deficiencies. It's important to note that some of these treatments—even prescriptions—have come under fire for certain [health risks](#), so always check with your doctor before trying any of them yourself.

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The bottom line, say our experts: Don't try to wait it out and hope that things will get better. "Time is of the essence," Dr. Rodney says. "It's much easier to save the hairs that you do have than to bring back hairs that have been lost."



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Korin Miller is a freelance writer specializing in general wellness, sexual health and relationships, and lifestyle trends, with work appearing in Men's Health, Women's Health, Self, Glamour, and more. She has a master's degree from American University, lives by the beach, and hopes to own a teacup pig and taco truck one day.



Reviewed by [Brian Underwood](#)

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Brian Underwood is beauty director at Women's Health, where he oversees content strategy for the brand across all platforms, including digital, print, and social. Underwood previously served as beauty and wellness director at Oprah Daily and O, The Oprah Magazine. During his tenure leading beauty content for the Oprah brand at Hearst, stories Underwood commissioned were awarded the Skin Cancer Foundation Media Award and a Fragrance Award for Editorial Excellence (his second). He was the launch Beauty Director of Dr. Oz THE GOOD LIFE, and has held additional editorial positions at Fitness, Organic Style, Good Housekeeping, Life & Style Weekly, and Woman's Day and has written for Self, Shape, Seventeen, Redbook, Cosmopolitan, and many more. Underwood previously served on the Skin Cancer Foundation's gala committee and as partnerships director of the Trans Beauty Clinic, a New York-based charitable organization that provided beauty services and workshops to the city's trans community.

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