

Is drinking alcohol going to make you fat?

By Jill U. Adams, Washington Post

Are beer bellies a real thing? Do social drinkers really carry around an extra five pounds of weight?

I have avoided investigating the answers to this question for all my adult life – and all my years as a health reporter. Call it denial by someone who likes her wine.

Recently I learned that the caloric content of alcohol is higher (seven calories per gram) than that of proteins and sugars (both four calories per gram), and nearly as much as fats (nine calories).

That sounded very worrying, I'll admit. But remember that for managing weight, a more important number is the total number of calories in your beer (about 150 calories in a 12-ounce serving of regular brew, a reminder that there's more to a drink than the alcohol) or your glass of red wine (125 calories in a five-ounce serving). A sugar-heavy 12-ounce cola also carries 150 calories.

And as far as common wisdom on drinking and weight gain goes, I am here to report, the science is murky.

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