Fibromyalgia and Alcohol: Is It Safe?

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Can I Consume Alcohol If I Have Fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is a complex condition that impacts your entire body. There are many symptoms you may experience, and your risk factor for other conditions can be higher than the average person.

These factors make the temptation of drinking alcohol appealing. Unfortunately, however, drinking is not the best idea.

Avoid Alcohol for a Healthy Immune System

While much remains to be known about the origins of fibromyalgia, it is generally accepted that the condition has a strong link with immune system health. Some experts believe the illness may arise due to exposure to certain viruses, such as the Epstein-Barr virus or yeasts, such as candida albicans.

In order to fight off these pathogens, you need a strong immune system. Unfortunately, one of the side effects of drinking excessive amounts of alcohol is it diminishes immune system health.

Inflammation Is a Key Cause of Fibromyalgia Symptoms

Chronic inflammation results in pain, debility, and exacerbates fibromyalgia symptoms. Inflammation affects your entire body and increases your risk of developing minor and life-threatening illnesses, regardless of whether or not you have fibromyalgia.

Since fibromyalgia is an inflammatorily condition, you must be especially vigilant about avoiding anything that increases inflammation, including alcohol. Alcohol is a known irritant that can cause inflammation and worsen your fibro symptoms.

Take Care of Your Gastrointestinal Tract

Your illness and medications put you at an increased risk for developing gastrointestinal disorders.

Fifty percent of people who have fibromyalgia also have irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Most anti-inflammatory medications used to relieve fibromyalgia symptoms elevate your risk of internal bleeding, which is raised even further if you consume excessive amounts of alcohol.

If you take anti- inflammatory drugs, regardless of whether they are prescription or over-the-counter medications, you should not consume alcohol. In addition to raising your risk for bleeding, alcohol may cause nausea, vomiting, bloating and diarrhea.

Alcohol Is a Depressant

While alcohol may initially elevate your mood and relieve stress, the bottom line is that it is a depressant.

Because you have fibromyalgia, you may feel tired, depressed, anxious and simply lousy a lot of the time. In addition, chronic pain depletes your body of endorphins, which are known mood-enhancers.

Drinking alcoholic beverages as a temporary escape or mood lifter may be very tempting, but keep in mind that while you may initially feel better when you consume alcohol, you will likely feel worse the next day.

Detoxify Your Body

Having a chronic illness and experiencing limitations, pain, fatigue and impaired movement all impact your body's ability to detoxify itself efficiently.

Detoxification rids your body of harmful substances that are byproducts of daily living, including medications and exposure to harmful substances in food and the environment. Alcohol use diminishes your body's ability to detoxify itself efficiently.

As a result, inflammation, pain and increased debility may develop when you consume alcohol, especially if you do so on a regular basis.

Next page: try some healthy alternatives to alcohol that won't set off your fibro symptoms

Detoxify Your Body

When your body detoxifies itself efficiently, every cell functions better, your tissues are able to heal, and you feel more energetic. Alcohol is a toxin the body identifies as a poison. When you consume alcohol, your body spends precious energy (that could instead be used for healing) trying to detoxify alcohol.

Alcohol can damage your liver as well, which is a major detoxifying organ. Your liver transforms harmful compounds into harmless substances eliminated through your skin, respiratory, digestive and urinary tracts.

Most medications are primarily detoxified by your liver, so taking any medication makes your liver work harder. Drugs used to reduce inflammation and pain stress your liver, so when combined with alcohol, liver damage may arise.

Healthy Alternatives to Alcohol

Rather than consume alcohol, choose healthier beverages such as water, juice or herbal teas. Many alcohol-free sparkling juices are available if you want to have a champagne substitute for special occasions.

Herbal Teas Taste Great and Relieve Symptoms

Try drinking herbal teas, hot or iced, for pleasure and as symptom relief. Many herbs contain salicin, which is the original source of aspirin. Unlike aspirin, salicin from herbal teas does not cause stomach irritation or digestive problems.

While it generally takes longer to be effective, if consumed regularly the pain-reducing effects of salicin are more effective and last longer than aspirin.

Willow, birch and meadowsweet are herbs containing natural salicin. They are best consumed with tastier herbs, such as chamomile, lemon balm or ginger.

Chamomile is a relaxing, tasty herb that relieves inflammation and supports the health of your digestive system. Lemon balm has anti-depressant, soothing qualities. Ginger is a warming herb that supports immune system health and relieves discomfort.

Fibromyalgia and Stress

If you use alcohol as a stress reliever, try implementing some lifestyle changes instead. There is no reason for you to hesitate or feel embarrassed letting your health care provider and loved ones know if you are having difficulty coping. Living with a chronic health condition is hard, especially when symptoms come and go, and much remains to be learned about the illness.

Most people have very little understanding about how difficult life with fibromyalgia is. Because the illness presents in different ways, you may suffer needlessly due to other people's lack of knowledge and compassion.

Consider joining a support group. Learn as much as you can about fibromyalgia. Be prepared to educate those you love. Stay abreast of the latest information about the illness.

Don't Drink Alcohol If You Have Fibromyalgia

If you are attempting to manage pain or other symptoms with alcohol, consult with your health care provider for healthier options that provide higher quality, lasting relief. These interventions may or may not include medication.

While comparing the benefits with the drawbacks of drinking alcohol when you have fibromyalgia, it is clear alcohol has little to offer and can actually be harmful.