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U.S. Drops Daily Alcohol Limits From Dietary Guidelines, Ending Decades-Old Policy

Shift reflects scientific uncertainty over moderate drinking as officials urge Americans to simply “consume less alcohol for better health”

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The United States government has removed its longstanding daily alcohol consumption recommendations from the latest edition of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, a move that marks a significant shift in federal health policy. The new guidelines, released last week by the Trump administration, no longer specify a maximum number of drinks per day for men or women. Instead, they include a brief statement: “Consume less alcohol for better overall health.”

This change comes after years of debate among health experts and follows a global trend toward stricter or more cautious advice on alcohol use. In recent years, several Western countries have reduced their recommended limits or advised against alcohol consumption altogether, citing mounting evidence of health risks. Until now, U.S. guidelines had suggested up to two drinks per day for men and one for women—a threshold already considered high by international standards.

At a White House press briefing, Dr. Mehmet Oz, Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, addressed the new approach. “The general move away from two glasses for men and one glass for women—there was never really good data to support that specific quantity of alcohol consumption,” he said. He added, with a touch of humor, “The conclusion is: Don’t drink alcohol for breakfast.”

The updated guidelines reflect ongoing scientific uncertainty about the health effects of moderate drinking. Some studies suggest that moderate alcohol intake may lower the risk of certain diseases, such as coronary heart disease and stroke. Others point to increased risks of cancer and other health problems at any level of consumption. The World Health Organization has stated that no amount of alcohol is safe, while a 2024 report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine found that moderate drinking is associated with lower all-cause mortality compared to abstinence.

Dr. Laura Catena, an emergency physician and managing director of Bodega Catena Zapata in Argentina, commented on the new guidelines in an interview. She emphasized that moderation remains key but acknowledged that what counts as “moderate” can vary depending on age, health status, and individual risk factors. “If you are a healthy person of legal drinking age and younger than 65—since alcohol metabolism slows as we age—I still think that most of the data indicates that up to one

glass per day for women and up to two glasses per day for men is moderate," she said. She also noted that European advisory groups recommend skipping several days per week to avoid habit formation.

The removal of specific daily limits has left some wine enthusiasts and industry professionals uncertain about how to interpret the new guidance. While some see it as an endorsement of personal responsibility and common sense, others worry it could lead to confusion or increased consumption.

The change also comes at a time when social trends around drinking are evolving. The rise of "sober raves" and wellness retreats that incorporate both social drinking and mindful practices reflect a broader rethinking of alcohol's role in society. Mark Rivers, CEO of Canyon Ranch wellness resorts in the U.S., explained in a recent interview that his company introduced limited alcohol service to encourage social engagement among guests.

Meanwhile, the wine industry continues to monitor how these changes might affect consumer behavior. Dr. Catena advised wine lovers to enjoy their drinks with food and friends, drink slowly, alternate with water, and skip drinking on some days each week.

As Americans adjust to the new guidelines, public health officials stress the importance of making informed choices based on individual circumstances and consulting healthcare providers when in doubt. The government's decision to step back from prescriptive daily limits signals a new era in national alcohol policy—one that places greater emphasis on personal judgment amid ongoing scientific debate.