Dear Alice,

Is it alright to drink alcohol two months after having a Mallory-Weiss tear? Is the alcohol consumption a cause for a recurrence or is the vomiting that is the cause? Is it okay to continue drinking as long as there is no vomiting involved?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Unfortunately, there isn’t an answer to your question that applies universally to everyone. More to your line of questioning, Reader, research does not definitively indicate whether or not alcohol consumption increases the risk of recurrent tearing after being diagnosed with a Mallory-Weiss tear. To learn what’s best for a particular case, talking directly to a health care provider is recommended. Factors like an individual’s health history and the reason for the initial tear may influence whether a health care provider will advise against consuming alcohol or not.

For those unfamiliar with this medical condition, a Mallory-Weiss tear is a laceration in the mucus membrane between the lower part of the stomach and upper part of the esophagus, which sometimes (but not always) causes bleeding. Intense, prolonged vomiting or coughing and epileptic convulsions can cause these tears. Additionally, there is a correlation between extreme alcohol consumption (which can lead to vomiting) and Mallory-Weiss tears. Associated symptoms include blood in the vomit or stool. In order to diagnose the condition, a health care provider may use either a blood count test or an esophagogastroduodenoscopy (a big term to describe a procedure where a small camera is inserted down the esophagus to examine the esophageal lining, the stomach lining, and part of the small intestine).

The good news is that the body is often able to repair a Mallory-Weiss tear on its own after a few days. Occasionally though, treatment (such as surgery) is needed. In rare cases, a blood transfusion may be required if the tear results in a large amount of blood loss. If a tear cannot heal on its own and isn’t properly treated, the individual is at risk of continued bleeding necessitating more serious clotting procedures, blood transfusions, and/or surgery. As such, preventing further bleeding is a top priority for the individual to have the best possible health outcome.

Health care providers often advise patients recovering from a tear to either refrain from drinking alcohol all together or avoid drinking in excess. However, since the recommendations
on resuming alcohol consumption may vary from person to person, it's best to visit a health care provider for more tailored instructions.

Alice!
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