A little wine, sunlight help boost women's health

▸▸ Two of life's simple pleasures – a glass of wine, a little time in the sun – may have benefits for women's health.

Wine first: In a report from Spain, researchers at the University of Barcelona evaluated the effects of moderate consumption of red and white wine – 6.8 ounces, or two glasses a day – in 35 nonsmoking Spanish women, average age 38.

The study was done like any other controlled medical trial, with each woman drinking the recommended "dose" of either white or red wine for four-week periods, with a four-week dry period separating each round of study.

"The data showed that, in comparison with the baseline period, consumption of both red and white wines increased serum [blood] HDL cholesterol (often called 'good' cholesterol), which suggests a cardio-protective effect," says the report in the November issue of the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

"Similarly, serum concentrations of interleukin-6 and high-sensitivity C-reactive protein (both markers of chronic inflammation), decreased significantly after both wine ingestion periods," the authors write.

Other markers of cardiac health were affected "in a healthy way" by red wine a little more than by white wine, the researchers add. The study provides, "scientifically rigorous evidence" that moderate wine consumption helps keep the heart healthy by preventing low-grade inflammation in women, the Spanish team concluded.

"This continues to add to many other studies by showing the mechanisms by which both red and white wine help prevent heart disease," says Dr. R. Curtis Ellison, professor of medicine and public health at Boston

University. "When you give women a glass and a half of wine each day, you have considerable effects on improving inflammation, a little more for red wine than for white."

A number of other studies have shown the same protective effect in men, with slightly greater intake of wine, Ellison says.

Next, sunlight: In the same issue of the journal, a British-American team reported a trial in which levels of inflammation-related molecules were measured against blood levels of vitamin D, made naturally by the skin when it is exposed to sunlight.

"The purpose of the study was to see if there was a correlation between vitamin D levels and indicators of aging," says co-researcher Jeffrey P. Gardner, a professor at the Center of Human Development and Aging at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

In addition to measuring blood levels of inflammation-linked molecules such as C-reactive protein, the researchers also measured the length of sections of the women's DNA called telomeres.

"Other people's work indicated that telomeres were bioindicators of aging, more than a person's chronological age," Gardner says.

Longer telomeres indicate low levels of inflammation, he explains.

Sure enough, the data indicated that higher levels of circulating vitamin D were associated with longer telomere length. Women with the lowest concentration of vitamin C and highest concentration of C-reactive protein had telomeres short enough to indicate about 7.6 more years of aging than women with the highest vitamin D and lowest C-reactive protein levels. ◂◂

Source: U.S. News and World Report

Sunshine vitamin may help slow aging

▸▸ A study of 2,100 female twin pairs found those with higher vitamin D levels may knock off five years of aging, British and American researchers say.

Researchers at the London School of Medicine; St. Thomas' Hospital, in London; and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey used a genetic marker – leukocyte telomere length – and found those with the highest vitamin D levels had longer leukocyte telomere length, indicating lower levels of inflammation and body stress.

The telomere difference between those with the highest and lowest vitamin D levels was equivalent to five years of aging, the researchers say.

Previous research found that shortened leukocyte telomere length is linked to risk for heart disease and could be an indication of chronic inflammation – a key determinant in the biology of aging.

Several lifestyle factors affect telomere length, including obesity, smoking and lack of physical activity, but the researchers noted that boosting vitamin D levels is a simple change.

The findings are published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. ◂◂

Source: United Press International