HIV Meds and Alcohol Not a Toxic Mix, Yet Many Skip Doses While Drinking

November 6, 2012

Nearly half of all HIV-positive people who both take antiretrovirals (ARVs) and drink alcohol report skipping or stopping their meds while drinking, seriously compromising their CD4 counts and viral suppression. While much of past research on this phenomenon has focused on how alcohol impairs cognitive functioning, according to new study findings, people were significantly more likely to miss doses while drinking if they wrongly believed that mixing alcohol and ARVs is toxic to the body. The study was published in the Journal of General Internal Medicine and has been reported in several media outlets, though many have erroneously reported that half of all HIV-positive people on ARVs skip meds while drinking (in fact, those who don't drink, a significant percentage, weren't enrolled in the study).

For this study, researchers from the Department of Psychology at the University of Connecticut recruited 178 people taking ARVs who drink and followed them for 12 months. In addition to studying their beliefs about the supposed hazards of mixing alcohol with ARVs (previous studies have found that as many as one in four people with HIV who drink harbor these erroneous beliefs), the researchers monitored the study participants' alcohol use, HIV medication adherence and their CD4 counts and viral loads. Those holding false beliefs about toxicity were much more likely to fall into the 51 percent of the cohort who skipped or stopped their ARVs while drinking. This group was less likely to keep their viral loads undetectable and more likely to have a CD4 count less than 200. The paper stressed the need to correct the misinformation about mixing alcohol and ARVs and also to push for better medication adherence among alcohol users.

To read the study's abstract, click here.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/AM-Skip-Doses-23103-4750