

# Beer Miles

## *Do alcohol and training mix?*

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*As featured in the Web Only issue of Running Times Magazine*

“Ein prosit!” This song is bellowed with a clang of the stein at the traditional Oktoberfest. Spirits are high as the authentic German beers are tipped back. The song is interpreted as a salute to your health or well-being. Can a tall, cold one be related with good health and well-being?

Moderate alcohol consumption—defined as one drink per day for women and one or two drinks per day for men—may provide health benefits. Beer carries B vitamins and folates. It can reduce stress, slow aging and dementia, and boost spirits. It’s even been linked to depositing calcium and minerals to bone.

Sounds great, right? Pour up a glass of your favorite brew. Well, not so fast. The average Joe might take advantage of these health claims, but let’s face it, you’re in training. How will a drink or two affect those countless miles you’ve tallied?

Let’s be honest with ourselves: B vitamins and folates are available in countless foods. Adequate calcium and vitamin D found in a glass of milk will promote good bone health. In other words, It’s a stretch to say that you should drink beer to get vital nutrients.

### Rum Runners

The effects of alcohol and performance aren’t entirely clear. A statement by the American College of Sport Medicine notes improvement in balance with low alcohol levels, while saying that performance with a hangover is “undecided.” Though the effect of alcohol on performance in this respect is foggy, so to speak, many other aspects of alcohol consumption influencing you as a runner are apparent.

To start, alcohol can impair performance by having a diuretic effect, resulting in dehydration. There’s no question that poor hydration can be a detriment to performance. In addition, alcohol consumption may result in faster fatigue during hard workouts and slower recovery. It displaces carbohydrate from your diet, thereby impairing muscle glycogen storage. It’s weak in terms of nutrient density compared to healthy foods and other beverages. Sure it may help you relax, but it can also mask pain leading to injury.

Nevertheless, there’s an undeniable psychological component to alcohol consumption. Alcohol can boost spirits and reduce stress. There are plenty of runners who routinely have a beer the night before big competitions and manage to run great races.

As a whole, however, it appears alcohol and training doesn’t mix. Alcohol indeed falls into one of those choices you’re better to go without when it comes to training. And large

amounts of alcohol or binge drinking, especially in the post-run phase, is never advantageous.

### In the Real World

If you choose to drink, limit the amount. Pay particular attention to your state of hydration. Ensure you're properly hydrated with non-alcoholic fluids before drinking alcohol. Try to match alcohol intake with non-alcoholic fluid sources. For example, order a glass of water with your beer when dining out. Keep drinking non-alcoholic beverages well after drinking alcohol.

When you're tempted by happy hour with old friends after a hard workout, never skimp on your post-workout snack. Eat within 30 minutes of the workout and concentrate on fluids (non-alcoholic, that is). Avoid drinking on an empty stomach, and continue to follow your recovery nutrition efforts by having your next main meal within an hour or two of the workout. Good nutrition should never be sacrificed for empty alcohol calories.

Your body has to filter and process the leftovers from hard workouts. If you're already feeling sore and damaged, treat your body right by avoiding alcohol for the next 24-36 hours. Steer clear of alcohol if training has left you taking a prescription medication or anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen.

Traditions such as a prost at Oktoberfest can still be relished with moderation and good judgment. First and foremost, understand that alcohol can hinder performance. Be sensible in how your body responds to alcohol. Know the appropriate limits. Maintain your healthy training diet.

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