



## Wine and Headaches

A lot has been made about the benefits of drinking wine and heart disease. Some controversy still exists, but most studies show that moderate wine drinking can be beneficial. The key of course is moderation. Unfortunately, some individuals claim they get headaches when drinking wine, red wine in particular. Aside from the caveat about moderation, there can be any number of possibilities.

Allergies to the various compounds in wine are often blamed as the culprit causing headaches. Wine is a complex liquid containing many different chemicals. In most people, if the headache is caused by an allergy, it will be almost instant, within a few seconds or minutes of consuming the wine. Wine contains flavinoids, anti-oxidants and other pigments that give it color and flavor. Drinking light colored wines, such as white wine rather than red could help reduce the headaches.

Sulfites are naturally occurring byproducts of the fermentation process. It is impossible to find wine without it. However, New World wine, such as from the United States or Australia, often contain more sulfites because the sulfites are used to sterilize equipment and to kill wild yeasts. Try drinking Old World wines from such places as France, Italy or Spain. They most often use the naturally occurring wild yeasts to make their wines and don't use heavy amounts of sulfites. Additionally, some wine makers are now producing NSA, No Sulfite Added Wines.

Some people who think they may have wine allergy look for organic wines, hoping to avoid the chemicals used to induce growth and reduce pests. The reality is that most wines produced, now days pretty much use organic farming methods. Labels don't reflect this because to get certified as organic is an involved and sometimes expensive project. Biodynamic farming methods take advantage of the same methods as organic farming, as well as some other things, such as companion planting, and planting by the season and lunar cycles. There is no certification process, but labels may tell if biodynamic methods are used.

Allergies can be serious and should be checked out by a doctor. Often a person with an allergy to wine will also have allergy to grape juices. Identifying the exact histone will help determine if the allergy is the compounds in the wine, allergy to the alcohol, or something else.

Headaches that start later, often much later, after drinking wine, can have the same root causes, they just aren't allergies. People metabolize the many compounds they eat and drink at different rates and with differing efficiency. To prevent the headaches, trying to avoid the substances will help alleviate the problem. Americans tend to like to drink their wine quite young and very fruity, when it contains the most chemicals that can possibly create problems. Consider avoiding younger wines and New World wines which are big, bold, juicy, and fruity. Try drinking older and/or Old World wines that have had a chance to mellow a bit. The ageing process breaks down some of the possible headache causing chemicals and the added bonus is a bit more finesse in the wine.

The final recommendation is to drink water. Alcohol is a diuretic that dehydrates cells, causing headache. Water also dilutes the chemicals, and notably the solids, thus stretching out the time they enter the blood stream and go to be metabolized, reducing the headache causing stress on our systems.