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Low-to-Moderate Alcohol Consumption May Be Safe When Taking Methotrexate for Rheumatoid Arthritis or Psoriasis

 PDF (Size: 93KB) [Full-Text HTML](#), PP. 39-46 DOI: [10.4236/ojra.2012.23009](https://doi.org/10.4236/ojra.2012.23009)

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ABSTRACT

It is unclear if consumption of small to moderate amounts of alcohol is safe while taking methotrexate. We set out to determine whether there is an association between liver enzyme abnormalities and alcohol consumption in subjects taking methotrexate. The study sample was identified from the database of the South Central Veteran Affairs Healthcare Network, consisting of 10 hospitals in Texas, Oklahoma, Mississippi and Louisiana. From a cohort of 2443 eligible Veterans with rheumatoid arthritis and/or psoriasis taking methotrexate from 10/1/2007 to 9/30/2009, 120 cases with abnormal liver-enzyme elevation were randomly selected to compare with 120 controls. Data were collected from mailed survey forms that inquired about alcohol consumption habits, physicians' advice on alcohol, and methotrexate compliance. There was no significant difference in the number of non-drinkers and low-to-moderate alcohol drinkers between cases and controls ($p = 0.217$). Few persons identified themselves as heavy drinkers. Our data suggest that it is likely safe for patients with rheumatoid arthritis and psoriasis to consume low-to-moderate amounts of alcohol while taking methotrexate. However, alternative methods to improve capturing alcohol consumption in heavy drinkers are needed for more comprehensive results.

KEYWORDS

Methotrexate; Alcohol; Liver Enzymes; Rheumatoid Arthritis; Psoriasis

Cite this paper

B. Ng, "Low-to-Moderate Alcohol Consumption May Be Safe When Taking Methotrexate for Rheumatoid Arthritis or Psoriasis," *Open Journal of Rheumatology and Autoimmune Diseases*, Vol. 2 No. 3, 2012, pp. 39-46. doi: [10.4236/ojra.2012.23009](https://doi.org/10.4236/ojra.2012.23009).

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