Study links beer and spirits to kidney risk

LEVEL A2/B1


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I. WARM-UP

1. How often do people drink alcohol in your country?
2. What health advice about alcohol have you heard?
3. Do you think small changes in habits can help health? How?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

study
research that looks at data to learn new facts

risk
the chance that something bad may happen

kidney
the organ that cleans the blood in your body

damage
harm that makes something less healthy or strong

spirits
strong alcoholic drinks like whisky, vodka or gin

unit
a standard measure of alcohol used for counting drinks

reduce
to make something smaller or less

link
a connection or relation between two things

III. READING

A study from Anglia Ruskin University says beer and spirits raise the risk of acute kidney injury. Small amounts of wine may reduce the risk. The research, in Scientific Reports, used UK Biobank health data from 250,791 adults and followed them for 14 years.

People who drank nine units of spirits a week were 26% more likely to get acute kidney injury than those who had one unit a week. Beer drinkers who had 24 units a week were 15% more likely to develop the condition than those who had three units.

Drinking fewer than 14 units of red or white wine a week did not raise the risk. It seemed to protect against kidney damage. But wine drinkers who went over 14 units a week faced the same risk as others. The team, led by Dr Rudolph Schutte, said they found a link, not proof of cause. The UK's chief medical officers recommend a maximum of 14 units a week.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "Drinking beer and spirits raises risk of...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which drinks did the study say raised the risk of kidney injury?
2. How many units of spirits a week were linked to a 26% higher risk?
3. What amount of beer a week was linked to a 15% higher risk?
4. What did the study say about drinking fewer than 14 units of wine?
5. What limit do the UK's chief medical officers recommend?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Do these findings surprise you? Why or why not?
2. What simple habits can help protect our health?
3. How can people track their alcohol units each week?
4. Should labels explain units more clearly? Why?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Past continuous

We use the past continuous for an action in progress at a past time. Form: was/were + verb-ing, often with when/while to show the background action.

"At that time, many people **were drinking** *beer and spirits."*

"While researchers **were analysing** *data, they checked units."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the past continuous form.

1. I (read) ___ about the kidney study when my phone rang. _____
2. While Dad (cook) ___ dinner, he heard a report on alcohol. _____
3. We (watch) ___ TV when a story about wine came on. _____
4. While the nurse (take) ___ my blood, she asked me about alcohol. _____
5. My parents (talk) ___ about the study when I got home. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 8–10 minutes vocabulary, 10–12 minutes reading, 8–10 minutes comprehension, 10 minutes discussion. Fold grammar into reading time if needed.
- Pre-teach measurement ideas (unit, per week) with quick board examples. Highlight that risk means chance, not certainty.
- Run the reading silently first, then check key numbers in pairs. Sensitivity: the topic involves alcohol and health; allow students to speak generally or about public advice in their country rather than personal drinking.
- Differentiate: stronger students summarise each paragraph in one sentence; others underline figures and circle who said them.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Start with a quick show of hands, then ask for one reason for and against the result.
2. Elicit two concrete habits (sleep, water, steps). Push for how often and how long.
3. Have students list drinks they know and estimate units, then compare in pairs.
4. Collect sample labels on the board first, then ask for one clear change per student.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Survey: In pairs, design a 5-question class survey on weekly alcohol units and report findings in 5 minutes.

Writing: Write a 70-word public health note explaining the study's key numbers and the 14-unit limit.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Past continuous

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which drinks did the study say raised the risk of kidney injury?
   Beer and spirits.
2. How many units of spirits a week were linked to a 26% higher risk?
   Nine units a week.
3. What amount of beer a week was linked to a 15% higher risk?
   Twenty-four units a week.
4. What did the study say about drinking fewer than 14 units of wine?
   It did not raise risk and seemed protective.
5. What limit do the UK's chief medical officers recommend?
   A maximum of 14 units a week.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: We use the past continuous for an action in progress at a past time. Form: was/were + verb-ing, often with when/while to show the background action. (Examples constructed.)

"At that time, many people **were drinking** *beer and spirits."*

"While researchers **were analysing** *data, they checked units."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the past continuous form.

1. I ___ about the kidney study when my phone rang. **was reading**
2. While Dad ___ dinner, he heard a report on alcohol. **was cooking**
3. We ___ TV when a story about wine came on. **were watching**
4. While the nurse ___ my blood, she asked me about alcohol. **was taking**
5. My parents ___ about the study when I got home. **were talking**