



## The Health Benefits of Wine

Over the past few years, we have heard that drinking wine may lower blood pressure and reduce our risk of heart disease and stroke. Recently the discussion has included the mention of the J Curve, a graphic resembling the letter J.

**The American Heart Association** explains the J curve as follows:

When the blood pressure or blood cholesterol levels of large groups of people are plotted on a graph against CVD mortality, it often results in a J-shaped curve. This curve shows that those with higher blood pressure and/or cholesterol levels, closer to the top of the curve, are more likely to die from CVD. The curve also shows that those at the lowest end of the curve (with very low blood pressure and/or low cholesterol levels) also have higher CVD mortality. This accounts for the J shape and is known as the **J-curve phenomenon**. Most evidence, however, indicates that the group at the bottom-left part of the curve (with very low blood pressure and low cholesterol levels) tends to be different from the general population in other ways. Those differences may contribute to the apparent increase in mortality.

Research performed at Northwestern University Medical School has shown that a chemical in red wine, a form of estrogen, is believed to help reduce risk for heart disease. The substance is known as resveratrol and is highly concentrated in the skins of the grapes, most abundantly in red grapes. Therefore moderate consumption of red wine has been reported to reduce risk for cardiovascular disease. Resveratrol has also been shown to have anti-oxidant, anticoagulant, anti-inflammatory and anticancer effects.