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Mozzies on beer buzz

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The Queensland lifestyle of enjoying boozy barbecues could make us irresistible to mosquitoes and damage our health. While there are a few months left before mozzies become a real worry again, French scientists warned beer lovers to think again next time they reach for a coldie in the great outdoors.

Researchers from the IRD Research Centre in Montpellier found the malaria-spreading Anopheles gambiae, was 15 per cent more likely to fly towards humans after they consumed a beer or two. They believe the mosquitoes could have learnt to associate the beer odour with a reduced defensiveness against bites from boozy drinkers.

University of Queensland mosquito expert Dr Nigel Beebe said drinking alcohol changed the body’s metabolic rate, which some mosquitoes could find enticing. “The body becomes more acidic when it breaks down alcohol and that could add extra molecules to the natural smells that humans emit,” he said.

“Those changes could make a person’s body or breath odour more attractive to certain species of mosquito.”

Beebe said more research was needed to see if alcohol normally found around Brisbane. “I definitely wouldn’t be recommending cutting back on alcohol just yet,” he said.

“It could even be possible that drinking alcohol could prevent some types of mosquitoes biting humans.”

The study was conducted by providing beer to 25 volunteers before placing them in mosquito traps in Burkina Faso, in western Africa.

The insects were given the option of flying towards traps containing either open air or following the smell of a slightly sozzled human.