

Heavy Drinking by Adolescents, Young Adults Linked to Long-Term Adverse Health

November 29, 2007

Research Summary

Heavy drinking by adolescents and young adults is associated with increased long-term risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and other metabolic disorders, Newswise reported on Nov. 20.

The study revealed that the increased health risks were independent of the total amount of alcohol consumed over a lifetime or whether people stopped drinking as they matured.

“Early initiation of alcohol drinking and heavy drinking in adolescence and early adulthood seem to be associated with a number of adverse health effects collectively known as the metabolic syndrome,” said senior author Dr. Marcia Russell of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation’s Prevention Research Center in Berkeley, Calif.

Metabolic syndrome describes a cluster of metabolic risk factors that increase the chances of developing heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes. The exact cause of the syndrome is not known, but genetic factors, too much body fat, particularly in the waist, and lack of exercise increase the risk of developing the syndrome.

The study retrospectively collected information on 2,800 people based on data from the Western New York Health Study (1996-2001).

The research will be published in the January 2008 issue of the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism.

Smoking Illicit Drug Use Decline Among 8th-Graders, NIDA Reports

December 11, 2007

Research Summary

The annual Monitoring the Future survey finds declining use of cigarettes and illicit drugs among 8th-graders that signifies “an ongoing cultural shift among teens and their attitudes about smoking and substance abuse,” according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).

NIDA said that the 2007 survey found considerable declines in lifetime, past-month, and daily smoking among 8th-graders. Daily smoking rates fell to 3 percent, down from a peak of 10.4 percent in 1996.

A similar percentage of 8th-graders reported past-year marijuana use, down from 18.3 percent in 1996. However, the report found no declines in annual marijuana use among 10th- and 12th-graders.

“We are definitely seeing a decline in substance abuse among our youngest and most vulnerable teens, and we are committed to continuing our efforts,” said Elias A. Zerhouni, M.D., director of the National Institute of Health. NIDA director Nora Volkow added, “If this change in attitude is carried with [8th-graders] throughout the rest of their teen years, we could see a dramatic drop in smoking-related deaths in their generation.”

The survey reported stubbornly high rates of prescription-drug abuse among students, however, with about 15 percent of high-school seniors reporting nonmedical use of drugs like Vicodin and OxyContin in the past year. Binge-drinking rates among 10th- and 12th-graders also remain high, NIDA said.

Also, the bad news in the report was not limited to older participants: 8th-graders are less likely to perceive drugs like ecstasy and LSD as harmful, and both perception of harm and use of these drugs has increased among 10th and 12th-graders.

More information on the Monitoring the Future survey is available online.



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www.dwresourcecenter.org

Study Finds Workplace Drinking Culture Can Influence Alcohol Consumption

If social drinking is frowned upon at the workplace, chances are an employee is less likely to consume alcohol both on and off the job, according to a new study. “We found that employees at companies that most discouraged social drinking were 45 percent less likely to be heavy drinkers than those in workplaces with the most liberal attitudes to drinking, after taking into account other factors that influence drinking levels,” says Dr. Benjamin C. Amick III, co-author and the scientific director for the Institute for Work & Health. Heavy drinking was defined as having five or more drinks a day outside of work.

The findings are based on surveys of over 5,000 employees in 16 different organizations in the United States. They represented a range of different sectors. Employees were

surveyed on their drinking behaviors as well as their attitudes towards drinking.

Those surveyed were asked how often they drank alcohol, when they drank and where they did so. They also answered questions about their attitudes to social drinking. These included questions such as whether they thought drinking with colleagues after work boosted workplace morale, if drinking with clients was good for business and whether drinking eased boredom at work, improved their health, led to drinking problems or set a bad example.

Supervisors and managers, representing 137 workgroups, were asked about the drinking culture in their workgroups. The researchers found that those less likely to drink were

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women, people with strong religious beliefs and those who cohabited. Smokers and workers under the age of 35 were more likely to drink.

Around one in five (19 percent) workers was classified as a heavy drinker. A further 8 percent were considered frequent drinkers who had some alcohol on five or more days of the week outside of work. Eleven percent of workers were considered to have been drinking at work, which included drinks with clients or customers or at social events at work.

Rates of heavy, frequent and workplace drinking were significantly lower in companies that discouraged social drinking than in those that were most tolerant of it. Workers at these companies were 54 percent less likely to be frequent drinkers and 69 percent less likely to drink during the working day.

The researchers concluded that workplace drinking culture is crucial for changing drinking behaviors and public health efforts to reduce drinking-related problems should target workplaces. Workplaces can influence their drinking culture by having a drug free workplace program. Working Partners offers tips and tools for implementing such a program. Also, call the DWI Resource Center for free assistance in implementing or enhancing your drug free workplace program.

The study is published online in the journal Occupational and Environmental Medicine and can be purchased for a fee.

Helplines for Employees

The following organizations and resources provide free, confidential assistance to individuals who have, or know someone who has, a problem with alcohol or other drugs.

Substance Abuse Treatment Locator

www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov

Phone: 1-800-662-HELP

This Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Web site and toll-free phone line help individuals locate drug and alcohol abuse treatment programs in their communities.

AlcoholScreening.org

www.alcoholscreening.org

This free, confidential Web site lets individuals privately assess their own drinking habits and receive personalized feedback to help them determine if they need help to change those habits. Individuals can also find out about facilities in their communities that offer drug and alcohol abuse treatment and consultations with qualified health professionals regarding alcohol problems.

Al-Anon/Alateen

Phone: (888) 4AL-ANON

www.al-anon.alateen.org

Al-Anon provides information on the effects of alcohol abuse and refers friends and families of alcohol abusers to nearby support groups. Al-Anon's purpose is to help families and friends of alcoholics recover from the effects of living with the problem drinking of a relative or friend. Alateen is the organization's program for young people whose lives have been affected by someone else's drinking.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

Phone: (212) 870-3400

www.aa.org

AA offers a way to stop drinking to individuals who feel they have a problem with alcohol. AA groups are located in most cities and rural communities throughout the country. Look up "Alcoholics Anonymous" in a local telephone directory for a contact in your area.

American Council on Alcoholism

Phone: (800) 527-5344

www.aca-usa.org

This service provides referrals to alcoholism treatment programs nationwide and distributes written materials on alcohol abuse problems.

Cocaine Anonymous

Phone: (800) 347-8998

www.ca.org

Cocaine Anonymous provides support for people dependent on cocaine and other mind-altering substances. Callers are referred to local helplines.

Nar-Anon

Phone: (800) 477-6291

www.nar-anon.org

This worldwide program provides support for friends and families of individuals with substance abuse problems.

Focus on Recovery Helpline

Phone: (800) 234-0420

www.focushealthcare.com

This helpline provides support and information for recovering drug addicts through referral to local helplines staffed by other recovering addicts.

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Hopeline

Phone: (800) NCA-CALL

www.ncadd.org

This organization, a planning and oversight agency for public substance abuse treatment programs, provides written information on alcohol and drug abuse and referrals to treatment and counseling services nationwide.

Researchers Say Drug Use Akin to Traumatic Brain Injury

December 6, 2007

Research Summary

Users of ecstasy and methamphetamine exhibit signs of brain damage similar to that suffered by victims of traumatic brain injuries, according to researchers at the University of Florida (UF).

A five-year study found that using these drugs can cause a

The City of Albuquerque and the DWI Resource Center invite you to attend the DWI Business Alliance meeting on February 6, 2007. Please call 881-1084 for more details or visit our website www.dwiresourcecenter.org

chemical chain reaction leading to cell death in the brain, memory loss, and other potentially permanent problems.

"Using methamphetamine is like inflicting a traumatic brain injury on yourself," said Firas Kobeissy of the UF College of Medicine, who studied the brains of rats exposed to drugs and found that the damage they cause to certain proteins in the brain could lead to cell death and brain inflammation.

"We found that a lot of brain cells are being injured by these drugs ... When proteins are oxidized they are not functional. When proteins are not working, the cell cannot function."

The study was unveiled at a recent meeting of the Society for Neuroscience.

Drinking Heaviest in European Nations

December 4, 2007

News Summary

Fourteen of the 15 nations that lead the world in per-capita alcohol consumption are located in Europe, according to a new survey.

Forbes reported Nov. 28 that the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development's study on the World's 15 Heaviest-Drinking Countries found that per-capita alcohol consumption was highest in Luxembourg, where residents consume an average of 15.5 liters of alcohol annually. Following closely were France, Ireland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.

The study found that Europeans tended to have more acceptance and tolerance for alcohol use than nations in other parts of the world, and also tended to have low alcohol taxes. Luxembourg, for example, has some of the lowest alcohol taxes in Europe.

A separate study found that the Czech Republic leads the world in per-capita annual beer consumption, and the 94 percent of 15-year-old Czechs identified themselves as beer drinkers.