

Football game days tops for drinking among college students

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College students drink larger amounts of alcohol on football game days, comparable to well-known drinking days such as New Year's Eve and Halloween, according to research from The University of Texas at Austin.

Psychologists found those women, particularly lighter drinkers, were more likely to engage in risky behaviors following alcohol consumption. The study appears in the November issue of Addictive Behaviors.

"Most events associated with heavy drinking occur only once a year, such as Spring Break, or once in a lifetime, such as a 21st birthday, but the weekly football schedule presents students with more regular opportunities to drink," said psychologist Kim Fromme, an author of the paper and director of the university's Studies on Alcohol, Health and Risky Activities Laboratory.

Fromme and co-author Dan J. Neal of Kent State University tracked students during the 2004-05 and 2005-06 University of Texas at Austin football seasons, the latter of which culminated in a national championship for the school.

The researchers found students were especially likely to drink more during high-profile games against conference or national rivals. However, the increased drinking rates only occurred when students were on campus. For instance, drinking levels were high for the 2005 regular-season Ohio State game, but were relatively low for games against rival

Texas A&M (played during Thanksgiving break) and both Rose Bowl games, including the national championship (played during the semester break).

"These results indicate drinking is connected not only to the game itself, but to the social context associated with the event," Fromme said.

The study, funded by the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, is the first to track drinking patterns across an entire sports season.

Source: University of Texas at Austin

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