

Teens who drink with parents may still develop alcohol problems

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Parents who try to teach responsible drinking by letting their teenagers have alcohol at home may be well intentioned, but they may also be wrong, according to a new study in the latest issue of the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*.

In a study of 428 Dutch families, researchers found that the more teenagers were allowed to drink at home, the more they drank outside of home as well. What's more, [teens](#) who drank under their parents' watch or on their own had an elevated risk of developing alcohol-related problems.

Drinking problems included trouble with school work, missed school days and getting into fights with other people, among other issues.

The findings, say the researchers, put into question the advice of some experts who recommend that parents drink with their teenage children to teach them how to drink responsibly -- with the aim of limiting their drinking outside of the home.

That advice is common in the Netherlands, where the study was conducted, but it is based more on experts' reasoning than on scientific evidence, according to Dr. Haske van der Vorst, the lead researcher on the study.

"The idea is generally based on common sense," says van der Vorst, of Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands. "For example, the

thinking is that if parents show good behavior -- here, modest drinking -- then the child will copy it. Another assumption is that parents can control their child's drinking by drinking with the child."

But the current findings suggest that is not the case.

Based on this and earlier studies, van der Vorst says, "I would advise parents to prohibit their child from drinking, in any setting or on any occasion."

The study included 428 families with two children between the ages of 13 and 15. Parents and teens completed questionnaires on drinking habits at the outset and again one and two years later.

The researchers found that, in general, the more teens drank at home, the more they tended to drink elsewhere; the reverse was also true, with out-of-home drinking leading to more drinking at home. In addition, teens who drank more often, whether in or out of the home, tended to score higher on a measure of problem drinking two years later.

The findings, according to van der Vorst, suggest that teen drinking begets more drinking -- and, in some cases, alcohol problems -- regardless of where and with whom they drink.

"If [parents](#) want to reduce the risk that their child will become a heavy drinker or problem drinker in adolescence," she says, "they should try to postpone the age at which their child starts [drinking](#)."

Provided by Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs

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