

# Alcoholism can affect both timing and overall survival of marriage

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There has been an abundance of research on the associations between drinking behavior and marital status, but many questions remain regarding the timing of when an individual gets married and divorced and if there is any relation to alcohol use. A new study released in the April 2011 issue of *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research*, which is currently available at Early View, explores that subject in detail and found that alcohol dependence was a strong predictor of both delays in marriage and early separation.

According to Mary Waldron, an assistant professor at the Indiana University School of Education and lead author, few studies have examined the impact of [alcohol](#) involvement on timing in marital transitions across development.

"Previous research documented associations between adolescent substance use and early marriage or cohabitation, but much of this work did not follow participants past their 20s," she said.

The researchers recruited over 5,000 Australian twins in the early 1980s, assessing physical, psychological and physical manifestations of [alcohol](#) use, including age at onset of [alcohol dependence](#). The researchers also established age of first marriage and age of separation from the marriage in twins who were between the ages of 28 and 92 at last assessment.

Although early drinking is one of the best predictors of later alcohol dependence, the results showed that there was a strong association

between alcohol dependence and delayed marriage, as well as early separation. It was also found that genetic influences contributed to these associations for both men and women. According to Waldron, while heritable risks appear to be important, additional research is needed to better understand the role of genes and their interplay with environmental influences.

While follow-up studies with more diverse samples are also needed, the results of this study underscore the fact that problem drinking affects more people than simply the alcoholic.

"Young adults who drink alcohol may want to consider the longer-term consequences for marriage," said Waldron. "If drinking continues or increases to levels of problem use, likelihood of marriage, or of having a lasting [marriage](#), may decrease."

Provided by Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research

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