

Seven minutes of physician counseling can curtail drinking and save lives

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Problem drinkers who end up in hospital emergency departments are more likely to curtail their binge drinking and overall alcohol consumption if they receive physician counseling on the spot — even just seven minutes of it — and are less likely to drive under the influence. The study by physicians at Yale School of Medicine appears in *Annals of Emergency Medicine*.

Researchers looked at nearly 900 [emergency](#) department patients with harmful drinking problems. They found that those who received brief counseling sessions from a trained emergency practitioner subsequently had significantly lower rates of [alcohol consumption](#) and driving after drinking than those who didn't.

The study also found that these short interventions by emergency practitioners continued to affect the lives of patients even a year after the counseling.

Dr. Gail D’Onofrio, chair of emergency medicine at Yale School of Medicine, said, “So many of the tragedies we see in the emergency department are due to problem [drinking](#). Our study shows that brief counseling of patients can improve outcomes and have a life-saving impact.”

Other authors are David Fiellin, Michael Pantalon, Marek Chawarski, Patricia Owens, Linda Degutis (now at the Centers for Disease Control), Susan Busch, Steven Bernstein, and Patrick O’Connor of Yale School of Medicine.

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