

'Drunkorexia' leads students to risky behaviour

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New research by Simon Fraser University grad student Daniella Sieukaran is the first to study the long-term relationship between dieting and heavy drinking among young adults.

Known as “drunkorexia,” it is a growing phenomenon with post-secondary [students](#) in which young women, and sometimes men, restrict their diets in order to reserve calories for consuming large quantities of alcohol.

The research found this dangerous combination of alcohol abuse and [dieting](#) can lead to greater alcohol-associated risk behaviours, such as engaging in unprotected sex after [drinking](#), and alcohol overdose.

Sieukaran, who is pursuing a combined MA/PhD in clinical psychology, presented her research at the Canadian Psychological Association’s 73rd annual convention in Halifax this summer.

Her research surveyed 227 17-21-year-old York University students’ dieting and drinking habits at the beginning and end of a four-month period.

“I wanted to know the effects of dieting and heavy drinking over time,” she says.

Sieukaran found that of three types of disordered eating — dieting, emotional eating, and eating in response to external stimuli rather than

hunger — only dieting was associated with increased alcohol-associated risk behaviours.

“With the other types of disordered eating, there was actually a decrease in those types of behaviours,” she says. “So there’s a real connection between dieting and heavy drinking.”

She adds, “It’s a special group of drinkers that we should be focusing on in terms of prevention and treatment programs.”

Provided by Simon Fraser University

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