

# Why some mothers (wrongly) let kids try alcohol

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Early introduction may lead to problem drinking in teen years, researchers say.

(HealthDay)—Many parents wrongly believe that allowing young children to taste alcohol may discourage them from drinking when they're teens, a new study finds.

"The idea that early exposure to [alcohol](#) can discourage a child's interest in drinking has a strong foothold among some parents of elementary-school-aged children," lead author Christine Jackson, a social ecologist at RTI International, a nonprofit research organization, said in an RTI news release.

Early introduction to alcohol is a major risk factor for problem drinking during the teen years, the researchers warned.

They analyzed interviews conducted with 1,050 mothers of third-grade

children and found that one-quarter of them said allowing their children to taste alcohol would discourage their curiosity about it because they would not like the flavor and because it would remove the "forbidden fruit" appeal of it.

The researchers also found that 40 percent of the mothers felt that not allowing their children to taste alcohol would only increase their desire to have it, 22 percent believed children who taste alcohol at home with their parents would be better able to resist [peer pressure](#) to drink alcohol, and 26 percent thought it would make their children less likely to experiment with risky drinking in middle school.

Nearly 33 percent of the children in the study said they had tasted beer, wine or other [alcoholic drinks](#). There was a strong association between parents who were in favor of allowing their children to taste alcohol and children's reported alcohol use.

"These findings indicate that many parents mistakenly expect that the way children drink at home, under parental supervision, will be replicated when children are with [peers](#)," Jackson said. "More research is needed to understand how parents acquire these ideas and to understand the relationship between early sipping and alcohol use in adolescence."

The study was published online Sept. 17 in the journal *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*.

**More information:** The U.S. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism offers tips on [parenting to prevent alcohol use](#).

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