

Time restrictions on TV advertisements ineffective in reducing youth exposure to alcohol ads

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Efforts to reduce underage exposure to alcohol advertising by implementing time restrictions have not worked, according to new research from the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Dutch Institute for Alcohol Policy. The report, published in the *Journal of Public Affairs*, confirms what Dutch researchers had already learned in that country: time restrictions on alcohol advertising actually increase teen exposure, because companies move the advertising to late night.

In 2009, Dutch regulators sought to reduce youth exposure to alcohol advertising by restricting times during which [alcohol ads](#) may be aired on television or radio. Under this restriction, alcohol advertising was prohibited between the hours of 6 AM and 9 PM. In 2010, compliance with the time restriction on television was close to 100 percent.

CAMY researchers used simulation analysis to model what would happen if a similar policy were applied to U.S. television advertising for alcohol, taking into account the program type and audience demographics. They found that time restrictions do protect viewers under age 12, but they actually increase the exposure of the young people most likely to start drinking, that is, teens aged 12 to 20. This happens because teens increase as a percentage of the nighttime television audience after 9 PM.

"In light of the policy in the Netherlands and the recommendations for similar policies in other countries, including Ireland and the United Kingdom, determining the impact of time restrictions on youth exposure is a public health priority," said lead author and CAMY researcher Craig Ross, MBA. "In the wake of time restrictions, alcohol companies push their ads onto late night programming, when the adolescent/teenage audience is more highly concentrated, thus increasing advertising exposure for this high-risk group."

Alcohol is the drug most frequently used and abused by adolescents in the U.S. and in the Netherlands. At least 14 long-term studies have found that the more young people are exposed to alcohol advertising and marketing, the more likely they are to drink, or if they are already drinking, to drink more.

"With growing numbers of adolescents in the U.S. having a television in their bedroom, forcing alcohol advertisers to move ads into late night television is akin to inviting them to have a private conversation with adolescents every evening," concluded study co-author and CAMY director David Jernigan, PhD. "For countries such as the U.S., where alcohol advertising is protected as commercial speech, policies that restrict [alcohol advertising](#) to programs where the underage audience is not over-represented are likely to be more effective."

This policy is endorsed in the U.S. by the National Research Council, the Institute of Medicine, and 24 state attorneys general.

Provided by Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health

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