

Firm rules by parents can prevent adolescent binge drinking

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(Medical Xpress)—A Deakin University study has found that rates of teen binge drinking were reduced by 25 per cent when parents set rules not to supply or allow adolescent alcohol use.

A research team led by Deakin's Professor John Toumbourou conducted a two-year Resilient Families parent education program through the early [secondary school](#) years. Information was provided on the harmful impact of adolescent [alcohol](#) use and parents were encouraged not to supply or allow adolescent alcohol use.

The researchers found that rates of [binge drinking](#) at age 14 were reduced by 25 per cent in the 12 schools that were randomly assigned to the Resilient Families program compared to 12 usual practice comparison schools. The results have been published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

The reductions in adolescent alcohol use were related to the parents in the intervention schools setting firmer rules discouraging underage alcohol use, Professor Toumbourou said.

"These findings reinforce a growing trend for young Australians to avoid alcohol use during the secondary school years," he said.

"In 2002 national school surveys showed 29 per cent of 12-15 years old students used alcohol each week, this dropped to 11 per cent by 2011. This drop is because increasing numbers of parents and young people are

now aware of evidence that the adolescent brain remains vulnerable to alcohol misuse into the mid-20s. There is a historic opportunity to encourage a new generation in Australia to avoid the damaging effects of alcohol experienced by previous generations.

"The single biggest contribution that Australian governments could make to encourage this popular movement would be to show courage and raise the legal [drinking](#) age from 18 to 21."

Shane Varcoe, Director of the Dalgarno Institute (a coalition of alcohol and drug educators), said: "The Deakin University findings are good news and align with the efforts of a coalition called '21BeThere'. The growing coalition, made up of citizens and organisations from across Australia, is supporting efforts to reduce the harmful effects of [youth drinking](#) by raising the legal [drinking age](#) from 18 to 21. This policy has been identified to have the most evidence for delaying youth drinking and reducing the harm of youth alcohol use."

Professor Toumbourou will address a '21BeThere' community forum in Adelaide on Thursday 17 October that will explore youth attitudes to raising the [legal drinking age](#).

More information: www.21bethere.org.au/home

Provided by Deakin University

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