

Over 45s drink more frequently than young women

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A QUT researcher has launched an online survey looking at middle-aged women's drinking habits.

(Medical Xpress)—They don't tend to binge drink but middle-aged women over 45 consume alcohol more frequently than any other age group, a behaviour putting their long-term health at risk, according to QUT researcher Hanna Watling.

Ms Watling, from QUT's Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety - Queensland (CARRS-Q), said [women](#) aged 45-59 were at highest risk of suffering long-term health effects because of alcohol, with up to 13 per cent drinking on average more than two standard drinks a day.

She said research had found that when women increased their drinking from two to three standard drinks a day, they more than tripled their lifetime risk of death from alcohol related diseases.

"As women age we are seeing a change in their drinking patterns," Ms Watling said.

"Heavy drinking is more common among [young women](#) in their late teens and twenties but as they age women tend to abandon [binge drinking](#) for less heavy but more frequent levels of alcohol consumption."

To better understand what influences this shift in drinking patterns as women age, Ms Watling has launched an Australian-wide online survey to find out why women over 45 are turning to the bottle.

"My preliminary study suggests that for women in their 40s and 50s, drinking is not about getting drunk."

"Instead it's more that alcohol becomes a greater part of everyday life as you age, for example having a wine with dinner or in front of the TV. Alcohol also becomes a way of dealing with the stresses of busy lives such as family worries, work pressures or social commitments.

"What we are concerned about is that those women, who drink moderately but often, may end up consuming a larger volume of alcohol than those who drink heavily but less frequently."

Ms Watling said the outcome of these shifting drinking patterns was on the one hand positive.

"With age, fewer women are exposed to the short-term risks associated with acute intoxication such as alcohol-related violence and accidents," she said.

"But on the other hand what we are seeing is that with age there is an increase of women who are placing themselves at risk of a host of long-term negative health outcomes such as liver disease, heart disease, high blood pressure and increased risk for many cancers, such as breast cancer.

"It's important that we don't overlook the problems that can arise from the harmful effects of regular alcohol consumption among women in their 40s and 50s."

Ms Watling's survey is open to all Australian women aged 45-59 who have consumed [alcohol](#) at least once in the past 30 days.

"Young women's drinking has received a lot of attention and comparatively there is little research that focuses on women's drinking habits beyond adolescence and young adulthood," she said.

"What this study aims to do is increase our understanding of what factors influence [alcohol consumption](#) among women aged 45-59, so we can look to reduce these harmful frequent [drinking](#) habits."

More information: The survey is available at survey.qut.edu.au/f/180293/2fcb/

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