

# Warning: Birthdays can be bad for your health

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New research has found that birthday-related drinking is associated with upsurges in hospital admissions among young people. This study of drinking behaviour in Ontario, Canada is published online today in the scientific journal *Addiction*.

Researchers, led by University of Northern British Columbia Associate Professor of Psychiatry Dr. Russ Callaghan, analysed records from all hospital admissions in Ontario over a five-year period (2002-07) involving people aged 12 to 30 years. They discovered that during the week in which Ontarians turned 19 – the legal drinking age – they produced an increase in hospital admissions of 114% for men and 164% for women. In other words, young Ontarians had more than double the alcohol-related [hospital admissions](#) in the week of their 19th birthday as they did the rest of the year.

Callaghan says this type of research can help policy makers develop event-specific strategies to reduce hazardous [drinking](#).

"This study shows a clear need for efforts to prevent alcohol misuse at one's own birthday celebrations – not just when turning 19 but both before and after that milestone year," he said.

The study revealed similar but less extreme birthday-week spikes at other ages, starting as early as 16 years for boys and 14 years for girls. The largest spikes occurred on the weeks of people's 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd and 30th birthdays.

**More information:** *Addiction* [DOI: 10.1111/add.12626](https://doi.org/10.1111/add.12626)

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