

Lack of exercise linked to alcohol misuse

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A large-scale survey of African-American men and women found that those who rarely or never exercised had about twice the odds of abusing alcohol than those who exercised frequently, a finding that could have implications across all groups.

The survey of 5,002 African-American men and women found that those who did not engage in [physical activity](#) at all or only occasionally had nearly double the chance—between a 84 percent and 88 percent higher odds—of abusing alcohol than those who regularly engaged in some form of physical activity. This was after adjusting for demographic factors such as income and neighborhood characteristics.

Survey participants were drawn from the National Survey of American Life (NSAL), a study that took place between 2001 and 2003 and aimed to identify racial and ethnic differences in [mental disorders](#) and other psychological distress, including those used by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. The study used the DSM-IV definition of [alcohol abuse](#), which is defined as drinking that has negative social, professional and/or legal consequences.

The survey finding will be presented at the American Public Health Association meeting in Chicago on Nov. 2.

"There have been studies of the association between substance use and related comorbid health conditions, such as depression and anxiety," notes April Joy Damian, a doctoral student in the Department of Mental Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the

study's author. "There has been little research that has examined the connection between exercise and decreased odds of [alcohol use disorder](#).

"Because the NSAL study was essentially a snapshot that was taken at one point in time, we can't say that engaging in physical activity will prevent people from developing alcohol use disorder or that alcohol use disorder can be treated with physical activity," Damian says. "Given that alcohol use disorder has a high rate of co-occurrence for depression and anxiety, it merits further study all around, for African Americans as well as others. We should consider how physical activity contributes to alcohol-related behavior and design interventions for people who are at risk."

"Association between physical activity and [alcohol](#) abuse and dependence: Findings from the National Survey of American Life (NSAL)" was written by April Joy Damian.

Provided by Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health

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