

Playing sports can lead some boys to binge drink

January 15 2016, by Jared Wadley

High school boys who participate in sports are more likely to binge drink—especially to an extreme, according to a new University of Michigan study.

The study showed that among boys who play at least three [sports](#), nearly 22.6 percent say they have binge drunk (at least five drinks in a sitting) and 8.7 percent say they have consumed at least 10 drinks in one sitting—extreme [binge drinking](#).

Among boys who play at least one sport, the corresponding percentages are 20.4 percent for binge drinking and 8.5 percent for extreme binge drinking. For male non-athletes, the numbers are 18.3 percent and 7.6 percent, respectively.

No differences in extreme binge drinking were found among [girls](#) who play sports versus girls who do not—although female athletes are more likely to binge drink than non-athletic girls.

Previous studies show that sports have a positive impact on academic achievement and health, and lower the risk of teens engaging in criminal behavior and getting school suspensions.

But stress and peer pressure in risky drinking behaviors causes some students to imbibe heavily, possibly risking memory loss, becoming a victim in fatal traffic accidents and dying from alcohol poisoning, says Philip Veliz, the study's lead author.

Using data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Veliz and colleagues asked [high school](#) students about the largest number of alcoholic drinks they had in a row during the last 30 days. Questions also involved the number of sports teams played (either school or community group) and cigarette/marijuana use.

The entire sample used for the study was 11,154 [high school students](#)—5,718 girls and 5,436 boys. Overall, 14 percent of girls and 19 percent of boys indicated they binge drank. Moreover, about 4 percent of girls and 8 percent of boys indicated they engaged in extreme binge drinking during the past 30 days.

Veliz said [boys](#) may be at a greater risk to engage in binge drinking due to the stress associated in defining their self-worth and masculinity, and coping with the demands of intense athletic competition.

"Future research needs to explore who these athletes are and what types of sport may exacerbate extreme forms of binge drinking," said Veliz, research assistant professor at the U-M Institute for Research on Women and Gender.

The findings appear in the *American Journal on Addictions*.

Provided by University of Michigan

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