

# Research proves it—the smell of alcohol makes it hard to resist

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The smell of alcohol may make it harder for people to control their behaviour according to a team of Edge Hill University researchers whose findings were published today in the *Psychopharmacology* journal.

During the computer-based study carried out at Edge Hill University, participants were asked to wear a [face mask](#) that was either laced with [alcohol](#), or a non-alcoholic citrus solution. Participants were then instructed to press a button when either the letter K or a picture of a beer bottle appeared on their screen.

The researchers measured the number of times the participants incorrectly pressed the button causing a 'false alarm'. These false alarms indicate a reduction in the participant's power to inhibit their behaviour when they were expected to.

Dr Rebecca Monk, Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Edge Hill University said that she and her fellow researchers found that the number of these 'false alarms' were higher in participants who were wearing the alcohol treated mask.

"We know that alcohol behaviours are shaped by our environment including who we're with and the settings in which we drink.

"This research is a first attempt to explore other triggers, such as smell, that may interfere with people's ability to refrain from a particular behaviour. For example, during the experiment it seemed that just the

smell of alcohol was making it harder for [participants](#) to control their behaviour to stop pressing a button.

Fellow researcher and Edge Hill Professor, Derek Heim elaborated, saying that studies of this nature could further our understanding of addiction and substance abuse.

"This research is an early laboratory based effort that, whilst promising, needs to be replicated in real world settings to further its validity" said Professor Heim.

"Our hope is that by increasing our understanding of how context shapes substance-use behaviours, we will be able to make interventions more sensitive to the different situations in which people consume substances."

**More information:** Monk, R. L. et al. (2016). Smells like inhibition: The effects of olfactory and visual alcohol cues on inhibitory control, *Psychopharmacology*, [DOI: 10.1007/s00213-016-4221-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/s00213-016-4221-1)

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