

# Medical students, burnout and alcohol

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Medical students are more prone to alcohol abuse than their peers not attending medical school, especially if they are young, single and under a high debt load. That's according to a study on medical student burnout by researchers at Mayo Clinic. The findings appear in the journal *Academic Medicine*.

"Our findings clearly show there is reason for concern," says Liselotte

Dyrbye, M.D., Mayo Clinic internist and senior author of the paper. "We recommend institutions pursue a multifaceted solution to address related issues with burnout, the cost of medical education and [alcohol abuse](#)."

Mayo researchers surveyed 12,500 medical students, and one-third of those students responded. Approximately 1,400 of that subgroup experienced clinical alcohol abuse or dependence. Nationally, that translates to about one-third of those responding, compared to only 16 percent of peers not in [medical school](#), and double the rate of alcohol abuse or dependence of surgeons, U.S. physicians or the general public based on earlier research by this team.

Burnout factors such as emotional exhaustion or feelings of depersonalization were all highly associated with alcohol abuse or dependence among the [medical students](#). Three other factors were independently associated:

- A younger age than most peers in medical school
- Being unmarried
- Amount of educational debt

No statistical difference was found between differing years of medical school or between men and women.

Researchers say the average cost of medical school from 1995 to 2014 increased by 209 percent at private colleges and 286 percent at public schools. They say physicians graduating with a medical degree in 2014 had an average of \$180,000 in educational debt.

"In our paper we recommend wellness curricula for medical schools, identifying and remediating factors within the learning environment contributing to stress, and removal of barriers to [mental health services](#)," says first author and Mayo Medical School student Eric Jackson.

**More information:** [journals.lww.com/academicmedic...  
mong US .98559.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/academicmedicine/abstract/201603001/201603001_mong_US_98559.aspx)

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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