

PTSD, alcohol use disorder common in adolescents exposed to natural disasters

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Adolescents who were highly exposed to natural and environmental disasters show higher levels of alcohol misuse and emotional trauma than their peers, according to new research presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in San Diego. The findings indicate the importance of mental health services for youth that have experienced emotional trauma.

Previous research has found long-term post-traumatic stress and depression symptoms in both adults and adolescents who experienced Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill disaster in 2010. Researchers led by Robert Fuchs, medical student at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, examined post-disaster alcohol use by adolescents.

More than 450 high school students (age 14–18) in St. Bernard Parish in Louisiana who had been exposed to both the hurricane and oil spill as children participated in a survey about socioeconomic status, emotional states, level of alcohol use and their degree of disaster exposure.

Adolescents who were highly exposed to Hurricane Katrina and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill had higher levels of [alcohol misuse](#) and [emotional trauma](#) compared to their peers with lower exposure to these disasters.

The researchers conclude that social support to help adolescent disaster victims with feelings of depression, anger and loneliness may reduce

alcohol use in these populations.

Provided by American Psychiatric Association

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