

Teen regular drinkers more likely to battle alcohol as adults

July 11 2018, by Marion Downey



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Adolescents who drink weekly before age 17 are two to three times more likely to binge drink, drink drive, and be dependent on alcohol in adulthood compared with peers who don't drink, a study of 9000

adolescents across Australia and New Zealand has found.

The study published in the international journal *Addiction* and led by researchers from UNSW Sydney followed young people from age 13 to 30 and provides some of the most robust evidence to date that early patterns of [drinking](#) are not limited to adolescence but rather persist into adulthood and are associated with a range of alcohol related [problems](#).

Frequency of drinking in adolescence was just as likely as [binge drinking](#) and problem drinking (in adolescence) to predict later problems.

Lead author of the study Dr Edmund Silins said the findings suggest that delaying drinking will have significant public [health](#) benefits. As well, public health messages need to focus as much on frequency of drinking as the amount consumed, he said.

"Discouraging or delaying alcohol use in adolescence is likely to have substantial benefits in adulthood in terms of preventing harmful drinking behaviours which adversely affect health and wellbeing," said Dr Silins.

"Current public health messages tend to focus on the amount consumed, and there are fewer messages recommending less frequent drinking."

Co-author Prof George Patton from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute and lead investigator on the Victorian Adolescent Health Cohort Study said: "The study further debunks the myth that teen experimentation with alcohol promotes [responsible drinking](#); instead, it sets a young person up for later-life problem drinking."

A further co-author, Associate Professor Joe Boden from the Christchurch Health and Development Study, said the study provides robust evidence for policymakers, health promoters, and parents.

"The findings suggest that delaying when teens start drinking regularly could have significant benefits to individuals, families and society as a whole," said Associate Professor Boden. "Public health messages should focus on curbing frequency of drinking as well as the amounts consumed."

A surprising finding of the study was that there were no direct associations between adolescent drinking and negative psycho-social outcomes such as sexual risk-taking, early parenthood and mental health problems.

More information: Edmund Silins et al. Adverse adult consequences of different alcohol use patterns in adolescence: an integrative analysis of data to age 30 years from four Australasian cohorts, *Addiction* (2018). [DOI: 10.1111/add.14263](https://doi.org/10.1111/add.14263)

Provided by University of New South Wales

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