

Young drinkers beware: Binge drinking may cause stroke, heart risks

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You might want to think before you go out drinking again tonight.

Research by Mariann Piano, senior associate dean of research at Vanderbilt University School of Nursing, has found that young adults who frequently binge drink were more likely to have specific cardiovascular risk factors such as higher blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar at a younger age than non-binge drinkers.

In a study published in the *Journal of the American Heart Association*, researchers found that [binge drinking](#) by young men was associated with higher systolic blood pressure (the force on blood vessels when the heart beats) and that frequent binge drinking had additional effects on cholesterol, both factors in contributing to cardiovascular disease. Female binge drinkers had higher blood glucose levels than abstainers.

In reporting her findings, Piano, Ph.D., FAAN, the Nancy and Hilliard Travis Professor at Vanderbilt, said that young adults need to be aware that repeated binge drinking may have consequences beyond the immediate.

"The risk extends beyond poor school performance and increased risk for accidental injury," she said.

Current evidence suggests that development of [high blood pressure](#) before age 45 is associated with significantly higher risks of cardiovascular death later in life.

The study also found differences in how binge drinking affected [young men](#) and women. Young men who reported that they repeatedly binge drink had higher [systolic blood pressure](#) and total cholesterol while young women who repeatedly binge drink had higher [blood](#) sugar levels compared to non-binge drinkers.

Piano and her co-authors examined high [blood pressure](#), cholesterol, [blood sugar](#) and other cardiovascular risks in 4,710 adults ages 18-45 who responded to the 2011-2012 and 2013-2014 U.S. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Participants were classified as non-drinkers, binge drinkers 12 times or less a year, and high-frequency binge drinkers (more than 12 times a year).

High-frequency binge drinking was reported by 25.1 percent of men and 11.8 percent of women. Binge drinking 12 times a year or less was reported by 29.0 percent of men and 25.1 percent of women.

Binge drinking rates are at an all-time high, Piano said. One in five college-age students reports three or more binge drinking episodes in the prior two weeks. More students drink to get drunk, then black out. They consume six to seven drinks per binge drinking episode. Compared to previous generations, the pervasiveness, regularity and intensity of binge [drinking](#) may place today's youth at greater risk for alcohol-related harm.

More information: Mariann R. Piano et al, Effects of Repeated Binge Drinking on Blood Pressure Levels and Other Cardiovascular Health Metrics in Young Adults: National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2011-2014, *Journal of the American Heart Association* (2018). [DOI: 10.1161/JAHA.118.008733](https://doi.org/10.1161/JAHA.118.008733)

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