

One in four parents not prepared for 'parenting hangovers' this holiday season

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Parents may plan for transportation and childcare ahead of holiday gatherings but are they prepared for a potential, day-after "parenting hangover?"

A quarter of parents of young children who drink [alcohol](#) on special occasions do not think about limiting how much they drink or whether they'll be able to take care of their child the next day, according to a report from the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health at the University of Michigan.

The nationally-representative report is based on responses from 1,170 parents with at least one child ages 0-9 years.

Three in 10 parents (29 percent) also said they know of an adult who may have caused an unsafe situation for their child due to [drinking](#) alcohol at a special celebration. These parents were most concerned that the other adult was too impaired or hung over to supervise their child (61 percent) or to handle a possible emergency (48 percent); and less commonly that the adult drove with a child while impaired (37 percent), got violent or out of control in front of the child (28 percent), or injured the child (7 percent).

Another 1 in 12 parents (8 percent) admitted to a prior situation where they may have been too impaired from alcohol to take care of their parenting responsibilities. About the same proportion of mothers and fathers acknowledged a prior lapse in judgment related to alcohol.

"Most parents planning to drink [alcoholic beverages](#) on a night out arrange for a designated driver and childcare for the event itself," says poll co-director Sarah Clark. "Fewer parents may consider how their alcohol consumption could impact parenting responsibilities to their young children the next day."

Most parents reported drinking alcoholic beverages during special events, either often (27 percent), sometimes (36 percent) or rarely (17 percent). Among those, 73 percent said they were very likely to make [plans](#) in advance for someone to watch their child during the event, and

68 percent were very likely to plan for safe transportation.

However, just 47 percent were very likely to think in advance about how much they will drink, and 64 percent said they are very likely to make plans for someone to take care of their [child](#) the day after the event.

"The amount of alcohol consumed can affect parenting the next day," Clark says. "A parent passed out on the couch will not be effective in recognizing and reacting to the everyday safety risks that occur with children."

One particularly interesting finding: Parents who said they drink rarely were less likely to plan in advance for childcare and transportation the night of the special event and childcare responsibilities the following day compared to parents who drink sometimes or often.

However, even rare instances of celebrating with alcohol can have serious consequences for children, Clark says.

Parents may prevent overindulging by alternating alcoholic drinks with non-[alcoholic drinks](#), Clark notes. But if they aren't sure whether their [alcohol consumption](#) may impair parenting abilities, it's better to be safe than sorry.

"Parents who plan to drink alcoholic beverages during an outing should plan ahead for transportation to ensure they arrive home safely," Clark says.

"If alcohol use may potentially impact their ability to take care of their children the following day, [parents](#) may also consider childcare arrangements. Having children stay the night at a relative's home or asking a grandparent to stay overnight are options to ensure [young children](#) are in a safe and supervised environment."

Provided by University of Michigan

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