

Social anxiety disorder may increase risk of alcoholism

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New research published in *Depression and Anxiety* indicates that, unlike other anxiety disorders, social anxiety disorder may have a direct effect on alcoholism.

For the study, researchers assessed alcoholism, social anxiety disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, [panic disorder](#), agoraphobia, and specific phobias through interviews with 2,801 adult Norwegian twins.

Social anxiety disorder had the strongest association with alcoholism, and it predicted alcoholism over and above the effect of other [anxiety disorders](#). In addition, social anxiety disorder was linked with a higher risk of later developing alcoholism, whereas other anxiety disorders were not.

The findings suggest that interventions aimed at prevention or treatment of [social anxiety disorder](#) may have an additional beneficial effect of preventing alcoholism.

"Many individuals with social anxiety are not in treatment. This means that we have an underutilized potential, not only for reducing the burden of social anxiety, but also for preventing alcohol problems," said lead author Dr. Fartein Ask Torvik, of the Norwegian Institute of Public Health. "Cognitive behavioral therapy with controlled exposure to the feared situations has shown good results."

More information: Fartein Ask Torvik et al, Explaining the association between anxiety disorders and alcohol use disorder: A twin study, *Depression and Anxiety* (2019). [DOI: 10.1002/da.22886](https://doi.org/10.1002/da.22886)

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