

# Risk for alcohol use disorder increased after COVID-19 infection

February 13 2023, by Elana Gotkine

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There appears to have been an increased risk for alcohol use disorder

(AUD) after COVID-19 infection versus non-COVID-19 respiratory infections in some time periods during the pandemic, according to a study published online Feb. 9 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Veronica R. Olaker, from the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine in Cleveland, and colleagues examined the association of COVID-19 infection with a new diagnosis of AUD over time from January 2020 through January 2022 in a retrospective cohort study of electronic health records. New diagnoses of AUD were compared between patients with COVID-19 and patients with other respiratory infections who had never had COVID-19. Data were included from 1,201,082 patients with COVID-19 and 1,620,100 [patients](#) with other respiratory infections who had never had COVID-19.

The researchers found that compared with other periods, during the first three months of the pandemic, there was an increase in the risk for a new diagnosis of AUD in the three months after COVID-19 was contracted (hazard ratio, 2.53); in the next three time blocks (April 2020 to January 2021), the risk decreased to nonsignificant. After infection in January to April 2021 and April to July 2021, there was an increase observed in the risk for AUD diagnosis (hazard ratios, 1.30 and 1.80, respectively). In the next time blocks (COVID-19 diagnosis between July 2021 and January 2022), the results became nonsignificant again.

"The results of this study suggest that the risk of a new diagnosis of AUD after a COVID-19 diagnosis may not be a consequence of the [infection](#) itself but rather associated with the context of the [diagnosis](#) and the pandemic," the authors write. "Future work is required to clarify the relative associations of COVID-19 itself and the pandemic context in increasing risk for addictive disease."

**More information:** Veronica R. Olaker et al, Association of Recent SARS-CoV-2 Infection With New-Onset Alcohol Use Disorder, January

2020 Through January 2022, *JAMA Network Open* (2023). DOI: [10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.55496](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.55496)

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