

Alcohol in social media linked to problem drinking

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A University of Queensland study published in [Addiction](#) highlights a direct link between young people's exposure to alcohol-related social media content and problem drinking.

The study led by Ph.D. candidate Brandon (Hsu-Chen) Cheng from UQ's Australian National Center for Youth Substance Use Research examined results from 30 international studies of more than 19,000 people aged 24 and younger.

"We investigated the effects of exposure to alcohol-related social [media content](#) and also alcohol-related posts on their own social media profiles," Cheng said.

"Our study showed [young people](#) who were exposed to alcohol-related content on [social networking sites](#) consumed more alcohol and drank more frequently than those who did not.

"We also found exposure was linked with problem drinking behaviors, such as binge drinking, which is detrimental to physical and mental health.

"Social networking sites are not just promoting [alcohol consumption](#), but also encouraging young people to engage in dangerous drinking behaviors."

Professor Jason Connor, Director of the National Center for Youth Substance Use Research, said alcohol consumption is one of the leading risk factors of unintentional injury, [self-harm](#), sexual assault, alcohol overdose and death in young people.

"There is overwhelming evidence for tightening regulations on alcohol-related media on social networking sites," Professor Connor said.

"Most social media sites are self-regulated, but this has proven to be ineffective, and it can make enforcing restrictions challenging.

"For example, the minimum required age to use social media platforms

is rarely confirmed by the sites or it can vary.

"Preventive measures, like tightening regulations and educating young people and their parents, can help discourage underage teenagers and young adults from engaging in high-risk drinking behaviors.

"This will ultimately reduce the considerable disease burden of alcohol use in Australia in one of our most vulnerable population groups."

More information: Brandon Cheng et al, A systematic review and meta-analysis of the relationship between youth drinking, self-posting of alcohol use and other social media engagement (2012–21), *Addiction* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/add.16304](https://doi.org/10.1111/add.16304)

Provided by University of Queensland

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