

TV alcohol ads tied to problem drinking for teens, study finds

January 19 2015



Researchers saw correlation between the commercials and drinking initiation, binge drinking.

(HealthDay)—A new study finds a link between the number of TV ads for alcohol a teen views, and their odds for problem drinking.

Higher "familiarity" with booze ads "was associated with the subsequent onset of [drinking](#) across a range of outcomes of varying severity among adolescents and young adults," wrote a team led by Dr. Susanne Tanski of Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire.

Their work involved nearly 1,600 participants, aged 15 to 23, who were surveyed in 2011 and again in 2013.

Alcohol ads on TV were seen by about 23 percent of those aged 15 to

17, nearly 23 percent of those aged 18 to 20, and nearly 26 percent of those aged 21 to 23, the study found.

The study wasn't designed to prove cause-and-effect. However, the more receptive the teens were to [alcohol ads](#) on TV, the more likely they were to start drinking, or to progress from drinking to binge drinking or hazardous drinking, Tanski's team found.

Movement towards binge drinking and [hazardous drinking](#) occurred among 29 percent and 18 percent of those aged 15 to 17, respectively, and among 29 percent and 19 percent of those aged 18 to 20, respectively.

The findings were published online Jan. 19 in *JAMA Pediatrics*.

The research adds to "studies suggesting that alcohol advertising is one cause of youth drinking," the study authors said in a journal news release. They believe that current regulations on TV ads for alcohol products "inadequately protect underage youth."

But one expert took issue with the study.

"There are too many compounding variables to draw a correlation between TV ads and drinking behavior among youths," said Janina Kean, a substance abuse and addiction expert, and president of the Kent, Conn.-based High Watch Recovery Center.

She said that the study "doesn't take into consideration some of the other risk factors that might cause or lead someone to be more receptive to [alcohol advertising](#)," such as a person's genetics or family history of alcohol problems.

"Lack of guidance at home, other family members with alcohol issues,

and dysfunctional family relationships are all factors that can contribute to a person's issues with alcohol, and explain why alcohol-related advertising would have been memorable for such a person," Kean reasoned.

According to background information included in the study, alcohol remains the most widely used drug among young Americans. In 2013, about 66 percent of U.S. high school students said they had tried alcohol, nearly 35 percent said they'd drunk [alcohol](#) in the past 30 days, and nearly 21 percent reported recent [binge drinking](#).

More information: The U.S. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism has more about [alcohol and health](#).

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Citation: TV alcohol ads tied to problem drinking for teens, study finds (2015, January 19)
retrieved 23 April 2024 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-01-tv-alcohol-ads-tied-problem.html>

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