

New mothers reduce their alcohol intake, but this change is short-lived

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Credit: Sérgio Alves Santos on Unsplash

Most women dramatically reduce their alcohol intake on learning they are pregnant, but by the time their child is five they are back to their pre-pregnancy drinking levels, a new international study has found.

The research, led by the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, reported little change in the [drinking](#) patterns of men on becoming fathers.

The paper, 'Alcohol and parenthood: an integrative analysis of the effects of transition to parenthood in three Australasian cohorts' is published in the latest edition of *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* journal.

Lead author, psychologist Dr. Rohan Borschmann, said the study drew on data from three longitudinal population studies – two in Australia and one in New Zealand – which tracked the drinking habits of more than 4,000 people in their teens, twenties and thirties.

"Most mothers with a child aged under one take a brief time out from drinking, but it doesn't last," Dr. Borschmann said.

"By the time their youngest child has turned five, most mothers have returned to their pre-motherhood drinking patterns."

Dr. Borschmann said the research found that 15 per cent of mothers with a child aged five or older reported binge drinking in the past week.

"The reasons why women increase their drinking over the first five years after childbirth need to be explored in future studies.

"One of the important messages of our findings is that both men and women need to find different ways to put their brakes on their drinking during this time of life.

"The traditional combination of marriage, mortgage and kids no longer has any impact on men's drinking, while motherhood only prompts women to have a brief reprieve from drinking."

Dr. Borschmann said policy advisors and [health professionals](#) could send a message to people that if they can manage to reduce their drinking over the first 12 months, they have shown it can be done longer term.

"Reducing parental drinking is likely to produce a double dividend that is both good for the parent and good for the [child](#)," he said.

MCRI's Dr. Rohan Borschmann, who is also a research fellow at the University of Melbourne, said the aim of the research had been to investigate the extent that becoming a parent protects against heavy and problematic drinking in young men and [women](#).

Participants for the study came from the Australian Temperament Project, the Victorian Adolescent Health Cohort Study and the Christchurch Health and Development Study.

Provided by Murdoch Children's Research Institute

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