the drinking & teens project

THE UNIVERSITIES OF NEW SOUTH WALES, QUEENSLAND, NEWCASTLE, & TASMANIA AND CURTIN UNIVERSITY

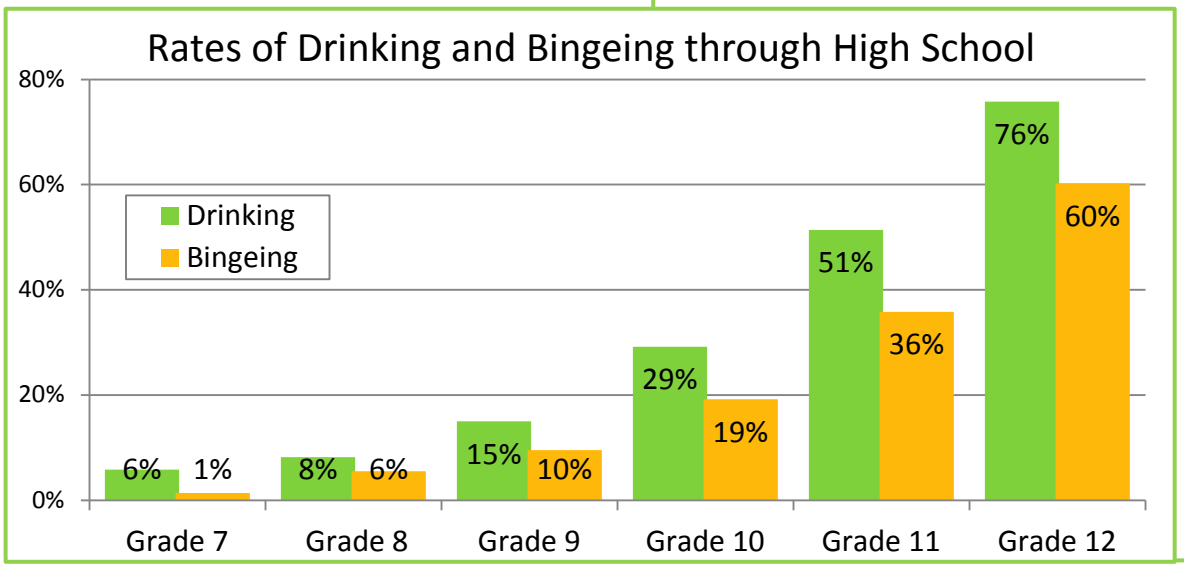
The Drinking and Teens Project has been running for 7 years, making it one of the longest running studies of youth alcohol behaviours in the world. Thank you so much for your continued efforts – we know you are all busy with work, study, travel, life...

The study will continue over the next few years, thanks to some additional funding to explore this important area. Your experiences in early adulthood are vital for us to understand the factors which influence the way that you and your friends use alcohol and how your early experiences with alcohol influence you as adults.

You may have seen some media coverage of some of the results of the study over the past few months – we have included a summary of these exciting results on the following page.

Rates of alcohol use in high school

The graph below shows the percentage people in the study who reported drinking and bingeing each year through from Year 7 (12 years old) to Year 12 (18 years old). The majority of drinkers reported drinking between 1 and 4 standard drinks on a drinking occasion. However, binge drinking (consuming more than 4 standard drinks on one occasion) has increased over time, with around 60% of you reporting drinking 4 or more standard drinks on one occasion at least once in the past year. We have included some further information about the effects different quantities of alcohol can have on the body and brain on the next page.



National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Sydney NSW 2052
Phone: (02) 9385 0111 Mobile: 0481 070 169
E-mail: drinkingandteens@unsw.edu.au Web: http://www.ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au

Giving children alcohol doubles their chances of still drinking a year later

Results from the first 4 years of this study showed that children/teens who are given alcohol by their parents are more likely to be drinking alcohol by age 15-16.

Adjusting for other important factors, parental supply of alcohol was associated with a doubling of the likelihood that teens would be drinking full serves of alcohol a year later. Getting alcohol from other sources, such as friends or other adults, also doubled the chance of the adolescents drinking full serves a year later.

But the surprising difference between those who received alcohol from parents and those who got it from other sources was in the quantity of alcohol consumed and the frequency of binge drinking. Those children who got alcohol from sources other than their parents were 3x more likely to binge drink. Adolescents given alcohol by their parents typically drank less on any drinking occasion than those supplied by their friends or others.

Professor Mattick said the results painted a complex picture for parents. "On the one hand parents who supply alcohol may be relieved that their children are less likely to engage in binge drinking, compared with those who obtain alcohol from other sources. However given that children supplied alcohol by their parents were 2x as likely to be drinking alcohol a year later as those not given alcohol, the results suggest that parents who supply alcohol, even with the best intentions, are likely to accelerate their children's drinking. There may also be later harms that are not yet obvious – so delaying alcohol use is the best strategy".

Short term effects of alcohol

The body's reaction to alcohol is affected by a range of individual factors including age, weight, body fat, sex, fitness, medicines and other drugs and tolerance to alcohol.

Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) refers to the amount of alcohol present in the bloodstream – 0.05% means that there are 0.05 grams of alcohol in every 100 millilitres of blood. Different BAC levels are associated with different symptoms:

<0.05% BAC	More relaxed, reduced concentration, talking a lot and slower reflexes, pleasant mood
0.05 – 0.08% BAC	Fewer inhibitions, more confidence, reduced coordination, judgement and cognition impaired, slurred speech, potential for aggression, reduced self-control
0.08 – 0.15% BAC	Confusion, blurred vision, poor muscle control, balance affected, intense moods: for example angry, sad, happy
0.15% - 0.3% BAC	Nausea, vomiting, needs help to walk, wants to sleep, memory loss
0.3 – 1.0% BAC	Dead drunk, heavy breathing, stupor, no bladder control. Possibly coma or death

Alcohol poisoning and overdose

Alcohol poisoning occurs when there is so much alcohol in the bloodstream that areas of the brain controlling basic life-support begin to shut down. Symptoms can include confusion, unconsciousness, vomiting, seizures, trouble breathing, slow heart rate, clammy skin, loss of coordination, and low body temperature.

If you think someone has alcohol poisoning, the most important thing you can do is to get medical help immediately. You can also help them by:

- Staying with them
- Don't let them drink more alcohol
- Making sure they are warm enough
- If they are unconscious, put them into recovery position, check their breathing, and keep their airways clear
- If awake, try to keep them in a sitting position and awake