

# Young women three times more likely to blackout than young men after binge drinking

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Adolescent women were three times more likely than young men to blackout after binge drinking alcohol, with the rate increasing as they got older, a new study has found.

And young females were nearly twice as likely as males to blackout from drinking the same amount of alcohol. The increased risk is likely due to differences in metabolism and body composition with women tending to be smaller, on average, than men.

The longitudinal study by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) found about 10 percent of 14-year-olds who drank alcohol had experienced a blackout.



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Experts say young women are three times more likely than males to experience a blackout after binge drinking.

The rate of blackouts rose through high school. By aged 19, nearly half of all young people who drank had blacked out from drinking too much, according to the research which was [published in January by the Society for the Study of Addiction](#).

Females were three times more likely to experience this escalation in blackouts than males.

The blackouts indicated young people were drinking at a level that affected their memory and behavior, researchers Wing See Yuen and Dr. Amy Peacock said.

Repeated binge drinking can cause brain damage. It also made young people more likely to engage in risky behavior including unprotected sex or driving under the influence.

Someone who had blackouts in adolescence was 2½ times more likely to have problems with alcohol.

The researchers found young people tended to know that drinking alcohol on an empty stomach could cause blackouts.

But fewer than one in four of the young people surveyed knew females were more vulnerable to blacking out.

For instance, the study found young women were 1.8 times more likely to have a blackout when drinking the same amount as males.

The eight-year study tracked the drinking behavior of 1821 young people in NSW, Western Australia, and Tasmania, starting from when they were 13 in year 7.

They were asked when they started drinking alcohol if they had alcohol-related blackouts, and if they had abused alcohol or become addicted.

Ms. Yuen, the lead author, said young people tended to understand the behavioral risk factors for blackouts, such as

rapid consumption of alcohol. But they had a “limited understanding of biological risk factors such as sex.”

## How to prevent blackouts

If you’re going to drink alcohol, experts say these tips can help prevent blackouts:

- Eat before and during a drinking session
- Sip rather than gulp or chug
- Drink water between each alcoholic drink
- Avoid having four or more drinks in two hours, which is binge drinking.

Alcohol affects everyone differently, so the number of drinks it takes to trigger a blackout varies from person to person.

Although everyone’s response to alcohol differs, an alcohol-related blackout happens when someone has a blood-alcohol concentration of about .15 or higher. That’s about three times the legal driving limit.

Blackouts are more likely to occur when someone drinks a lot quickly by “chugging” drinks or drinking on an empty stomach.

A blackout often happens when someone is conscious.

”Despite the name, someone who’s having an alcohol blackout

is not unconscious (although people might become unconscious during or after a blackout),” [said the researchers writing in \*The Conversation\*](#).

“They can continue to do things such as talking and walking, but afterward they can’t remember what they did while they were drunk. In other words, alcohol can temporarily stop your brain from forming long-term memories.”