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Alcohol Alert - October 14, 2022



Adults Who Misused Alcohol as Teens Report Dissatisfaction and Poor Health in Midlife

Newswise — Teenagers who misuse alcohol may struggle more with drinking problems in their 20s and 30s, be in poorer health and feel less satisfied with their lives, according to a study led by Rutgers and Virginia Commonwealth University.

Published in the journal *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, researchers defined adolescent alcohol misuse based on responses about frequency of drunkenness, frequency of alcohol use and alcohol problems at ages 16, 17 and 18.5. The early midlife outcomes they measured included life satisfaction, physical symptoms and self-rated health at age 34.

Using data from questionnaires of 2,733 pairs of twins born in Finland in the late 1970s, the findings remained consistent even after controlling for genetic and environmental factors that twin siblings share. The outcome underscores the importance of preventative interventions targeting adolescents with alcohol misuse and mitigating health consequences later into adulthood, researchers said.

Unlike other studies of its kind that found adolescent alcohol misuse directly influences later-life substance use and mental-health related

outcomes, this study found adolescent drinking may indirectly influence long-term physical health and life satisfaction rather than influencing it directly.

“This study is unique in that it seeks to understand whether poor physical health consequences continue beyond your 20s,” Salvatore said. “Our findings imply that drinking in adolescence and the consequences that follow are seen two decades later across multiple developmental stages.”

The findings indicate teenage drinking’s indirect influence on midlife physical health and life outcomes and highlight the need for prevention strategies for better long-term health. Understanding these long-term effects will further the understanding of early-targeted interventions in adolescence that may prevent or mitigate long-term negative health consequences and improve quality of life across the lifespan.

The study’s authors included Angela Pascale and Mallory Stephenson in the **Department of Psychology** at VCU; Peter Barr, Ph.D. in the Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University; Richard Viken, Ph.D., and Richard J. Rose, Ph.D., of Indiana University; Antti Latvala, Ph.D., Sari Aaltonen, Ph.D., Maarit Piirtola, Ph.D., Jaakko Kaprio, M.D., Ph.D., of the University of Helsinki (and Director of the Finnish Twin Studies); Hermine Maes, Ph.D., of the **Virginia Institute for Psychiatric and Behavioral Genetics** at VCU and **Danielle M. Dick**, director of the Rutgers Addiction Research Center. [READ](#)

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