

Young binge drinkers may have higher heart risks

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Young adults who frequently binge drink were more likely to have certain risk factors for cardiovascular disease than non-binge drinkers, according to new research in *Journal of the American Heart Association*, the Open Access Journal of the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association.

"Compared to previous generations, the pervasiveness, intensity (number of drinks) and regularity (several times per week) of binge drinking may place today's young adult at greater risk for more profound rates of alcohol-attributable harm," said Mariann Piano, Ph.D., R.N., study lead author and Nancy and Hilliard Travis Chair in Nursing and Senior Associate Dean for Research at Vanderbilt University School of Nursing in Nashville, Tennessee. "Young adults need to be aware that the consequences of repeated binge drinking may harm their hearts. The risk extends beyond poor school performance and increased risk for accidental injury."

Previous studies have found that binge drinking—often defined as consuming five drinks or more in a row for men (4 four or more drinks for women) per occasion within the past 30 days—increases cardiovascular risk among middle-aged and older adults. But among younger adults age 18 to 45 specifically, the relationship between binge drinking, blood pressure and metabolic factors remained unclear.

This study examined cardiovascular risks, including high blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar, among 4,710 adults 18- to 45-years-old who responded to the U.S. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) in 2011-2012 and 2013-2014. Participants reported non-binge drinking, binge drinking (1-12 times yearly), or frequent binge drinking (more than 12 times yearly). Then researchers compared blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels among the three groups.

Researchers found:

- High frequency binge drinking (more than 12 times a year) was reported by 25.1 percent of men and 11.8 percent of women. Binge drinking 12 times a year or less was reported by 29.0 percent of men and 25.1 percent of women.
- Young men who reported repeated binge drinking had higher systolic blood pressure (the force on blood vessels when the heart beats) and higher blood total cholesterol than non-binge drinkers and binge drinking young women.
- Young women who said they binge drink had higher levels of blood sugar than non-binge drinking women.
- All results persisted even after considering diet and physical activity.

"Implementing lifestyle interventions to reduce blood pressure in early adulthood may be an important strategy to prevent cardiovascular disease later in life," Piano said. "Young adults should be screened and counseled about alcohol misuse, including binge drinking, and advised on how binge [drinking](#) may affect their cardiovascular health."

This study showed only an association, not a cause and effect relationship, between [binge drinking](#) and cardiovascular risk factors.

The American Heart Association suggests [moderate alcohol consumption](#) for adults who choose to drink. The Association defines moderate alcohol consumption as an average of one to two drinks per day for men, and one drink per day for women. A drink is 12 ounces of beer, four ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof spirits. Excessive alcohol consumption increases the risk for alcohol dependency, [cardiovascular risk factors](#) including [high blood pressure](#) and obesity, stroke, certain types of cancer, suicide and accidents.

In the United States, [cardiovascular disease](#) is the leading cause of death. It causes about one out of every three deaths, or an estimated 2,300 deaths, each day, according to the American Heart Association. Some risk factors, such as family history and age, are uncontrollable. Many others, however, are controllable through lifestyle changes such as controlling high [blood pressure](#), controlling high blood cholesterol, controlling high [blood sugar](#), being physically active, eating a healthy diet, losing excess weight and stopping smoking.

More information: *Journal of the American Heart Association* (2018). [DOI: 10.1161/JAHA.118.008733](#)

Provided by American Heart Association

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