

# 'Tis the season for youth to curb binge-drinking

9 December 2014

With the holidays around the corner, we're all a little more likely to indulge, especially when it comes to alcohol. While a few extra drinks might be brushed off as holiday cheer, they can actually signal a problem in young adults.

That's because the [bad habits](#) we pick up in our youth may stay with us later in life, according to a new study from Concordia, in collaboration with the Université de Montréal and University of Massachusetts.

Its findings, which were published recently in the journal *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, suggest that teenagers who regularly consume [alcohol](#) are more likely to [binge drink](#), at least into their mid-20s.

Furthermore, young men—those who left formal education behind at an early age and those who have a tendency toward impulsive behaviour—are more likely to sustain the drinking habits they formed in adolescence.

## Defining the problem

"Most people don't even know when they're binge drinking," says Erin O'Loughlin, a co-author of the study and researcher with Concordia's Independent Program (INDI) and Department of Exercise Science.

"While they do know when they are wasted, the reality is that four consecutive drinks per sitting for a woman and five for a man constitutes binge drinking. And that means society is more tolerant of binge drinking than we think."

This lack of understanding what binge drinking actually is means that youth may not be tuned into how their [personal habits](#) are a cause for concern.

## A history of bad behaviour

These new findings emerged from the Nicotine Dependence in Teens (NDIT) Study, in which several Concordia researchers are involved. NDIT has been keeping tabs on the mental health, drinking habits and [physical activity levels](#) of 1,294 young people from the Montreal area since 1999, when they were 12 or 13 years old.

The NDIT study, which gathered data that can be used to study the relationship between [alcohol consumption](#) and health, suggests that of the 85 per cent of respondents who continue their heavy-drinking habits into early adulthood, some may face long-term consequences.

## A reality check for parents

As this study suggests, the perception that binge drinking is something that adolescents are bound to grow out of does not match reality.

"Parents should be aware that if their teenager is binge drinking, they are more likely to sustain binging later in life," says O'Loughlin. "This challenges the belief that being exposed to alcohol early on means they will be protected from alcohol-related problems when they grow up."

"But just as a parent would never give their child a cigarette to try, the same view should perhaps apply to alcohol. Delaying that first taste of alcohol might be the best thing you can do—even if it's New Year's Eve."

Provided by Concordia University

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