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Only One in Six Adults Say Their Doctor Has Discussed Alcohol Use

Only one in six American adults say their doctor or other health professional has ever asked them about their alcohol use, according to a new survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Among women who were pregnant at the time of the survey, only 17 percent said they had ever been asked about drinking, *USA Toda*y reports.

Among people who said they are binge drinkers, 25 percent said they had been asked about their alcohol use. Binge drinking is defined as having five or more drinks within two to three hours for men, and four or more drinks during that time for women, according to a CDC news release.

"Drinking alcohol has a lot more risks than many people realize," said CDC Director Thomas Frieden. "In the same way we screen patients for high cholesterol and high blood pressure, we should be screening for excess alcohol use and responding effectively."

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends that health professionals ask patients about their drinking.

Under the Affordable Care Act, new insurance policies cover alcohol screening. According to the CDC, studies show that asking patients about their alcohol use and offering brief counseling to those who drink too much can reduce problem drinking.

The survey, conducted in 2011, included 166,753 adults over age 18 from 44 states and the District of Columbia.

"We are not saying no one should drink. Most people who drink do so without adverse health effects," Frieden said. "But many people who do drink drink too much at a time or too much overall... The health system is not doing a good job of finding out about these problems."