

Tasting Alcohol at Early Age Common, Study Finds



A study of youth exposure to alcohol finds 37 percent of children in one Pennsylvania county had tasted alcohol by age 8, and two-thirds had tried it by the time they were 12.

Tasting alcohol at a young age leads to early drinking, researcher John Donovan of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center told *HealthDay*.

"Our earlier research found that childhood sipping predicts early initiation of drinking — drinking by age 14 or younger," he said.

The study, published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, included 450 children ages 8 to 18. They were asked how old they were when they first tried alcohol, when they first had a drink and when they first had three or more drinks on one occasion, or got drunk. They were also asked about problems related to alcohol, such as hangovers or passing out. Children who had sipped alcohol by age 10 were nearly twice as likely to start drinking by age 14 or younger, compared with their peers who had not tasted alcohol when they were 10. Early drinking has been shown to increase the likelihood of involvement in other problem behaviors in adolescence and in young adulthood, Donovan said.

By age 14, three-quarters reported sipping alcohol, 19 percent said they drank, 3 percent said they had three or more drinks on one occasion, and 2 percent said they had been drunk. By age 18, almost all of the teens said they had sipped or tasted alcohol, 78 percent reported drinking, and almost one-third said they had two or more alcohol-related problems.

The study found ethnic differences: 18 percent of black children tried alcohol by age 8, compared with 44 percent of children of European-American descent.

Are you concerned about the role alcohol plays in your and someone else's life? With 26 questions, NCADD has a simple self-test which is intended to help determine if you or someone you know needs to find out more about alcoholism. [Click here](#) to take our Alcohol Abuse Self Test.